social work
with groups 1960

SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL WELFARE

Foreword

The threshold of the sixties is an appropriate time for the field of social welfare and the social work profession to look ahead to the future in general and the next decade specifically. No profession sensitive to the needs of people can be unaware of the prevailing emotional tone that combines at one and the same time confidence and doubt, anticipation and uncertainty, hope and fear.

This volume on group services offers a review of the past, current concerns, and implications for the future. Gisela Konopka's paper, "Social Group Work—A Heritage and a Challenge," reviews our development to date with thoughts on what lies ahead. George Brager supplies a long-needed evaluation of our administrative procedures and the organizational implications for the types of services offered. Two nationwide concerns are appropriately reflected in social group work services: intergroup relations (Eleanor Ryder and Jack Weiner) and services for the aging (Jean Maxwell and Sebastian Tine). With mobility a major cultural factor, a careful evaluation of the service potential in short-term groups (Louise Shoemaker) is quite timely. Two papers focus on current social problems—delinquency and unmarried mothers, and on special settings—camp and residence (Fallon and Nolte, and Helen Phillips).

An encouraging aspect of this conference was the reflection of an increasingly clear articulation of philosophy and goals and a growing use of social and behavioral science research findings. The general proceedings of the National Conference on Social Welfare will carry the paper by Dr. Ralph Tyler, Director of the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University, which was the backdrop for most of the group service papers.

The Editorial Committee was composed of Merrill Conover, Education-Recreation Consultant, Health and Welfare Council of Philadelphia, as chairman; Yehuda Rosenman, Executive Director, Jewish Community Center of Baltimore; Mary Blake, Consultant on Group Work and Community Services, U. S. Children's Bureau; Beatrice Saunders, Publications Director, National Association of Social Workers, and Florence Ray, Assistant Director, National Association of Social Workers, Group Work Section, both ex officio.

MERRILL B. CONOVER

June 1960

Contents

Group work:
a heritage and a challenge

GISELA KONOPKA

Recently Carl Sandburg was in Minneapolis and spoke at the dedication of a junior high school. He recalled the opening of Lincoln's "house divided" speech: "If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it."

One is struck these days by the varying appraisals of where we are in the development of group work. One member of the Group Work Section of the National Association of Social Workers said recently, "I am so worried about group work. What is happening to it?" She sounded rather defeated. Yet almost daily we see the excitement of young group workers who tell us how wonderful and important they find their work. A former student working with neglected and delinquent girls says, "You learn group work in school, but you really feel its importance when you start working responsibly." The new director of a settlement house speaks of its work in a new community created by a federal housing project, and his eyes light up as he describes the opportunity of maintaining a healthy community—of truly preventive efforts. Another former student tells of his group of youngsters on probation and the great progress almost all of them have made. "Group work is the most helpful approach to them!" he exclaims. Certainly neither pessimist nor optimist is completely right. We must try to look realistically at where we stand; we can neither excuse nor explain ourselves by saying that we are a young field of work. Social

work itself has been practiced for ages, and for approximately sixty years has been taught formally as a profession. Even social group work is no longer so very young. It has been taught for about thirty years in schools of social work. A professional approach consciously developed for at least thirty years must take its responsibility for where it is.

Group work practiced in a new country is a great revelation. For years the anti-Nazi movement in Germany struggled with the question of the individual *or* the group. It was not only the Nazis who had to subordinate individual wishes and aspirations. Those who fought them had to do this too, under the force of inhuman pressures—as underground fighters who could not follow personal desires. Was this right? Was there only an "either/or" between the supremacy of the group or the supremacy of the individual? We could not find the answer. The person who considered the supremacy of the individual alone became an anarchist, did not care about others; yet subordination to the group alone was not only painful, but seemed wrong. And here in this new country one finds taught at universities and practiced in youth groups a philosophy that gives an answer. Group work is an approach consciously directed toward developing the individual's greatest capacity while relating him to the group and learning when he has to contribute and when he has to withdraw. Perhaps people who have grown up in a democracy do not realize the true greatness of this. Yet in recent years Americans have been confused about the individual and his relation to the group. Group work combines a philosophy emphasizing the importance of the individual *and* the group, with a method to use in realizing this goal. This is of immeasurable value.

Strangely, it has not been shouted loudly enough to the world. We have sometimes withdrawn and let manipulators or fads take over where sound practice should be used. The great contribution group work can make to a total society has been well expressed by Sallie E. Bright.

> Even the individual labor union member who strikes for the good of the trade, but has to forego buying his wife a new spring coat in the process, wonders sometimes whether he is an individual or only a member of a group. Group work has an answer to that national dilemma in the very statement of its purpose: Individual development within the group. That story will fall on the ears of a very grateful nation, if it is told well.[1]

[1] Sallie E. Bright, "Letting the Public in on Group Work Objectives," in Harleigh Trecker, ed., *Group Work Foundations and Frontiers* (New York: Whiteside, Inc. and William Morrow and Company, 1955), p. 48.

When we look back into the history of group work we realize that our agencies were originally separate, that they only gradually discovered their commonness. Social group work was influenced by the theories of progressive education, sociology, anthropology, and (later) casework and psychiatry. Its struggle for identification with social work was bound to be hard. Yet we can be proud of this wide multidisciplinary heritage. Today group work's early acceptance of sociology and cultural anthropology is beginning to be integrated into the whole of social work. It may be seen in the increasing emphasis on environment, in the addition of courses in group process for all students in many schools of social work. The Curriculum Study places emphasis on the importance of sociological and cultural concepts for all social work. Sometimes we feel angry or resentful that our own profession as a whole does not seem to see that this is what group work brought to it. Toward certain sociological concepts which group work has integrated for years it acts like a surprised child who suddenly sees the light of a Christmas tree. This *is* annoying. But we must be glad that development goes on. If we can present our theory clearly, perhaps other parts of the profession will understand better.

Though we have accepted social work as our profession, let us not forget our early allies. Why is there now so little contact with education and use of educational theory? We would benefit by increasing our contact again. This does not mean that we should become teachers or that all our agencies should employ them. On the contrary, this confusion of what positions are to be carried by what kinds of people has harmed us. It is not that the teacher knows less than the social group worker or that the social group worker knows less than the teacher. We do have certain ideas and theories in common, but our skills are quite different. The essential difference grows out of the simple fact that the teacher works with a "captive" group, while the social group worker has to capture his group. This does not mean that he has to become a promoter. His special skill is a *helping* one while the teacher's is a *teaching* one. If we learn not to confuse the two professions, we can learn a great deal from each other and work more closely together.

Learning theory has meaning for the helping process. And teachers, on the other hand, need our focus on the individual within the group. Gordon Hamilton once said that social work lies between the healing and teaching professions.

Our theory is not yet well developed—but we have theory and have taught it. For it is partially based on theories of other disciplines.

There is nothing wrong with this; it applies to all professions. It is important, though, that we use other theories in the framework of our own professional approach. Social group work is neither a technique, such as group dynamics for instance, nor a profession by itself. The profession is social work. Social group work is *one* of the approaches within the profession. It is a basic method of social work. Incorporated in the method are value orientation and knowledge. Many concepts underlying social group work are the same concepts that underlie all social work. They need not be repeated. Group work has added concepts to those of casework—as for instance that of "individualizing in a group," which includes an understanding of the individual but also understanding of the group and a highly complicated skill. It has taken from sociology concepts that have added to the understanding of individuals in groups—as for instance, social role or bond or conflict. It has taken concepts from psychoanalysis—as, hostility or peer conflict, parallel to but not always the same as sibling conflict in a family.

Social group work has developed *skills* which have influenced and will increasingly influence the total profession. It has, for instance, very specific skills of working with media other than words. Those are not purely recreational uses of activity. They represent group work's understanding of how people express themselves through other media than the spoken word, and how a helping person can relate to actions through other media, especially in work with children. This is a great contribution, needed more and more. The Hollingshead studies have shown how little help has been given to adults who cannot easily express themselves verbally. We can contribute to our colleagues in casework by helping them to see how one can work, even with adults, through other media.

Another group work skill valuable to the total profession is the skill of working with the "creative pause." Group workers have learned to allow for periods in a group that seem rather superficial, but which really help the recovery of the group to work on something more significant. Finally, the outgoing and rather informal approach which was often considered a weakness of social group work—and can be such, if inappropriately used—has proved valuable in making contact with highly suspicious and hostile people. The "aggressive casework approach" must have been influenced by this practice in social group work; it shows movement toward more informality in casework, thus bringing the two approaches closer together.

Group work is based on philosophy and theory, but it is practice.

Democracy as a way of life must be learned daily. It demands an effort other than a purely political concept. Certainly schools and families have a responsibility to teach and practice it; but to our youth-serving agencies and community centers this specific task is given by a society which realizes that voluntary associations are important to the maintenance of a democracy and as testing grounds. Group work in such agencies helps deprived people to learn what it means to be at a "bountiful table of life," as Margaret Berry once said, and strive toward improved conditions; or it can help others to use leadership intelligently. Eduard Lindeman once wrote,

> . . . the roots of democratic culture do not lie in theories and conceptions, but rather in conduct, in experience and its satisfactions. If these roots do not strike deep into the "soil" of human personality, they will be easily destroyed by their external enemies, or they will wither away and die for want of nutriment and exercise. Whenever in history the people have thought and felt and lived democracy there has been cast upon human experience a sharp luminosity. Fears were dispelled and hopes renewed. And, whenever in history tyranny and despotism have succeeded to power, human experience has been shadowed by suspicion, anger and bitterness.[2]

Whoever has doubted the integration of philosophy and mental health concepts can look at this paragraph and see with astonishment and awe how social group work has brought the two together. This is the heritage and the base of social group work.

How is this integrated into agency service? Let us take a look at what we call the "traditional" agencies. What is this tradition? Early articles written about group work were related to youth camps conducted by the labor movement. This was no accident. Group work's roots do not lie—as do those of casework—in the charity movement. They lie in organizations of self-help or promoting self-help. There is, for instance, the heritage of the YWCA. It helped first to organize industrial women. It was the organization that helped the most deprived women in the labor force—household employees—to lift their heads and organize for better conditions.

Another heritage is the recreation movement. It is ridiculous today to equate social group work with recreation; this is like equating casework with relief. Yet we must understand that heritage as one to be proud of, not to reject. Recreation grew out of the needs of city youth in the slums of the new industrial cities. "Recreation movement was

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[2] Eduard C. Lindeman, "The Roots of Democratic Culture," in Trecker, *ibid.*, pp. 24, 25.

a compensation for the deprivation of human expression . . . forced
on us by urban and industrial civilization," said LeRoy Bowman in
1931.[3] Jane Addams talked about recreation in this sense. A most
beautiful documentation of this is her *Spirit of Youth and the City
Streets*. Another one of the great pioneer women of social work re-
organized the corrupt dance halls in her city in the thirties. This was
not a ridiculous activity, nor an "uplift" operation. It was a social
service offered to lonely men to increase their sense of self-worth and
prevent their being exploited.

The tradition of our agencies is concern with the discrimination
against certain groups in our population. Settlements were in the
forefront of helping new immigrants and Negroes from the South. The
YMCA was concerned with the men who came from rural areas and fell
easily into the hands of unscrupulous exploiters. It was not an agency
that served predominantly comfortable middle-class youth, but was
dedicated to help those who had difficulties in entering the stream of
democracy, and helped to prepare those capable of leadership. The
Jewish centers were concerned with the Jewish immigrant; his need to
keep his own identity and yet become part of a community.

And what about the youth-serving agencies? Was their inheritance
a matter of playing games and beading necklaces? Old magazines of
Camp Fire Girls or Girl Scouts offer impressive testimony to an
emphasis on children as human beings, an idea not easily brought
forward at the beginning of the twentieth century. No question about
it—the "traditional agencies" *were* problem-centered. Yet there are
social group workers who fight this concept. They say that we do not
belong in social work—because in certain agencies we work with
"normal people," we are not problem-centered. One cannot agree. No
profession has a right to practice, if it is not helping to solve specific
problems. If there is no problem, human beings have the right to
conduct their life without professional help. The problems we deal
with are not predominantly intrapsychic ones. They range from emo-
tional problems of individuals to interpersonal ones in small groups,
to the serious relationship problems of population groups and man in
his whole environment. Our specific competence is to work on these
problems in the framework of the face-to-face group. Many traditional
agencies have constantly observed the social scene and have translated
the social conscience of citizens into actual work. They have accepted
the fact that problems change. Settlement houses today work, for in-

[3] Frank G. Bruno, *Trends in Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press,
1948), p. 271.

stance, with gang groups which are a current concern to the community. It should be noted that gangs are a problem not only to the neighborhood in which they live or to the youngsters themselves; they can be a serious danger to a whole society. As we work with the intensive disorders of individuals and the problems of the small group we may be preventing another Nazi movement in countries that have not yet experienced it. Out of hatred, disorganization, and frustration grow fascist and other hate movements.

All our traditional agencies will sooner or later have to make a very genuine evaluation of their services to see whether they are working on the "problem designated to them"—whether they are fulfilling the function that society considers a professional one.

Since the advent of industrialization many new problems have arisen all over this country and, indeed, the world. There is no reason why social group work, which has such a great contribution to make, should limit itself to a given number or kind of agencies. Children are no longer exploited in factories, as a rule, but when they get emotionally sick they are still "dumped" like inanimate objects. Dorothea Dix only *started* the fight for the mentally sick human beings who were treated like animals; all of us who have seen state mental hospitals know that many are still like communities of the Dark Ages—that they are often cruel dictatorships. And we know that living human beings, both children and adults, are kept there. Many are people who could recover. If social group work is a specific professional skill applicable to the change of community and group relations, it must make its contribution to the milieu in state hospitals and to special therapy groups. The same applies to correctional and other children's institutions. More and more, also, those who have recovered need help in their return to normal life. Better treatment in some state mental hospitals is releasing more patients into the community. Outpatient group work with those who need help in adjustment, under the auspices of settlement houses, church groups, Y's, or mental health clinics, is increasing and very necessary.

Clinics, hospitals, and institutions are often called the "new" settings. It is hard to see them as very different from the traditional agencies. Their demand for group work proves only that an important professional approach is needed in an increasingly wide range. It also means that problems in our society change, and we become more aware of neglected areas. Sometimes group workers in those settings have been accused of looking for a "soft job" while the traditional ones carry the burden. This merely shows that we do not know enough about each

other. Anybody who enters the large children's ward of a mental hospital, and sees children lying apathetically in empty rooms with no way of fulfilling even simple "normal" childhood drives, knows that the group worker who works in this setting is not taking a soft job.

What can be more difficult than work with hostile youngsters on a street corner or in a correctional institution? One cannot allow oneself to weigh so-called "traditional" against "newer" settings. There has been concern lest we "go psychiatric" as casework did for a few years. In the literature about group work in psychiatric settings known to me I have not found this tendency. Casework's "going psychiatric" happened earlier, in a period when psychiatry was new to social work. Group work entered the field later and was therefore able to keep its identity, and because of its original focus on both individual and group, also brought to these settings its knowledge of interpersonal relations and community influences.

Social group work practice is predominantly with children and youth. We have long experience and real competence in working with this age group. We know more about American children and youth than any other profession, because we work with them in informal situations where they open up freely. We know the range from rural to city youth, from intelligent capable youngsters to the emotionally blocked, the physically handicapped, the mentally retarded or disturbed. We know hostile, aggressive, and withdrawn children. We work with both sexes and with youngsters of every race, color, and creed in the country—and even in other countries. This fund of knowledge is not yet sufficiently used; we ourselves have not yet recognized our strength. The Girl Scout study of adolescent girls, for instance, is a great contribution, too little known in the wider field of our own profession. We must "dip into the bag" of our practice and present our findings and increase research. Much discussion of youth problems in this country is based on research in a limited segment of child and youth population, often only in specific stress situations. Our specialization in social work also sees youngsters in these situations, but sees them, too, in their native strength and capacities.

Group workers should be active in every committee on children and youth in the country, should develop research projects using the unusual group work situation—the interaction among youngsters in the presence of an accepted and accepting adult—and bring their findings to the public. This would undoubtedly help to diminish the present hostility toward youth in this country and ward off a dangerous

trend toward rigidity in working with youth. It would also increase
the use of group workers where they are most needed: in the so-called
"traditional agencies," as well as in correctional and therapeutic set-
tings, and especially in relation to public schools. School social work,
one of the increasingly vital services to our growing child population,
because of its case-finding and preventive aspects must be clearly under-
stood as a casework and group work function. How can anyone
diagnose children without seeing them in a face-to-face group? How
can anyone help children with their interpersonal relations, if not also
through the medium of the group? And how can one help teachers if
one does not work with them and talk to them on the basis of the class
situation, which is a group situation?

With changing needs in the community, group work skill is needed
and increasingly in demand for other age groups. With the growth
of the population of aged our practice is used more and more with an
age group we knew too little about even fifteen years ago. We have
learned that our contribution does not lie in a stereotyped recreational
approach; the whole day of an aged person is frequently "leisure" and
this is just the problem. In the state of Minnesota, for instance, group
workers have been and are in the forefront of services for the aged,
using their general social work knowledge of community needs and
their specific group work skills with community groups.

One can mention only briefly the increasing need of young adults
who have jumped from adolescence into the grave responsibilities of
parenthood. They not only need "courses" in child-rearing, but oppor-
tunity for free discussion, for showing their ignorance and moving out
of the peculiar "small-family isolation" that is seen all over the country.
Family camps and follow-up groups as exemplified in a large Chicago
camp show those new trends.

These are some specifics of group work practice. What is our general
function in present society? A profession cannot *choose* its own func-
tion; it is designated by those who use it. The manner of *fulfilling*
the function is the responsibility of the professional. People have
always wanted to be healed, but did not necessarily ask for a learned
medical profession. Neither have those down the centuries who wanted
news asked specifically for the ballad-singer who distributed it in the
Middle Ages, or the modern journalist, or TV programs. People see
the need of services for youth, for groups discriminated against, handi-
capped children, and so on. They do not necessarily say that these
needs must be met by the professional social group worker. A profes-
sion must prove its competence; then it will be used. The *need* for a

service will be expressed either by those who need it or by those who recognize the need for others. These are the *causes* we are fighting for. The *competent way* in which the need is fulfilled is our *professional function*. Our fight for the cause must be conducted on the basis of our knowledge of the community, and we must conduct it together with any concerned citizen. The professional function we must fulfill ourselves. Nobody has ever made this clearer than Porter Lee in his very significant speech on "Social Work As Cause and Function," in which he said:

> A cause is usually the concern only of those individuals who accept its appeal and who are willing to devote themselves to its furtherance. Its adherents may believe their cause to be so essentially right that all mankind should rally to it. There is, however, no obligation upon any individual to do so unless he wishes to. A function, on the other hand, implies an organized effort incorporated into the machinery of community life in the discharge of which the acquiescence at least, and ultimately the support, of the entire community is assumed.

And he adds,

> . . . an outstanding problem of social work at the present time is that of developing its service as a function of well-organized community life without sacrificing its capacity to inspire in man enthusiasm for a cause.[4]

Because of its specific nature, social group work can fulfill two basic human needs that are inherent in the individual as well as in the community of individuals. They are the need for belonging and for contributing. The need for belonging relates to the individual's dependency and the strength he draws from having roots. The need to contribute relates to the individual's need for feeling important, for being somebody in the community. Spranger once said, "Self-respect— the survival of the soul." This is what we are helping with. All social work is concerned with these needs, but—one may repeat—because of the specific nature of social group work we are working with them in their reality context and can help to fulfill them in a society which at present does not make provision enough for it. Since they are essential to the mental health of the individual, we also know that the survival of a democratic society relates to the fulfillment of these two needs.

It is clear that this is not easily accomplished on the professional level. Often the question has been raised as to what we should do

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[4] Porter R. Lee, *Social Work As Cause and Function* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 5.

about the fact that so much social group work is carried on by people who are not professionally trained, by people of other professions, or by members of our own profession not trained in social group work. The problem of social group work in being practiced by those who are not trained in it at all is one that permeates all social work. The total profession will have to make a concerted effort to solve it.

One way is through increased and better recruiting efforts. The Council on Social Work Education has used special funds to step up this campaign. The Group Work Section of NASW has established a special committee. Several national agencies have helped finance the pamphlet for group work recruiting. These are good beginnings, but they are not enough. We need the co-operation of agencies in using the words "social group work" whenever they recruit for professional positions, so that this may become a *known* concept. Only thus will young people realize what their preparation must be to enter this profession.

We need money to make some good films showing the wide range of group work practice. Above all, we especially need group workers and agency executives who enjoy their work, know its importance, and have convictions about its necessarily professional character. Those who love their profession can recruit for it. One cannot recruit with complaints about hours, compensation, vagueness of assignments, and so forth. The young man I heard saying that he had been a paratrooper and underground fighter in the war, but that nothing was as exciting as his social work experience, is the one who will inspire young people to enter the profession.

Another way is to clarify the positions in the agencies, stating which must be carried by persons fully trained in social group work, which can be filled by those under supervision of such personnel, and which can be carried by people educated in other professions. This must be done by agencies and in relation to their specific function. For instance, in a settlement house there will be certain groups that must be carried by a professional social group worker. There may be others that can be led well by sensitive young people under supervision of a social group worker who helps them to carry out this task. This should be done, not because we do not have enough group workers, but because these specific groups actually profit from this kind of leadership.

Social group workers must be able to function as supervisors as well as direct group work practitioners. There has been criticism of schools of social work for not giving enough emphasis to the teaching

of supervision. Schools should teach something about supervision. In almost all settings where group work is practiced this is a necessary skill. But no person should supervise who has not learned the specifics of direct service. It is true that supervision asks for an additional skill, which must be intensified through courses in advanced practice. The best supervisors know *practice* well—know its theory and have learned how to teach.

There is concern about others in our profession practicing group work without the necessary qualification. Anyone who has respect for his own education and development of his own skill and who is imbued with true respect for people in need will never want to be an amateur. When it is absolutely necessary, he will take over a function he has not learned, but he will either consider this an emergency or will ask for consultation or supervision. Many caseworkers have seen with alarm how some of our colleagues have jumped into working with groups without learning the discipline of it. Many responsible caseworkers, though, have taken on work with groups simply because not enough group workers were available. They learn by reading group work literature, they ask for institutes, they use consultation; they have a group worker on their staff who gives supervision, or they ask for outside supervision by a group worker.

Since caseworkers and group workers belong to the same profession, and since increasingly there is generic training with the exception of the specific learning of method, social workers can learn comparatively easily from each other when they respect each other. Group workers must be willing to help their colleagues, and they must be willing not to be defensive about this. They must also be able—because they are a minority—to interpret their skill clearly.

This brings us to the constant cry about the shortage of group workers. Many remedies have been suggested, including the establishment of priorities as to where group workers should go. It is hard to agree with this. First of all, no truly professional person will let the profession tell him where he should go. Also, each of the settings in which group workers practice today is of equal importance. Working with groups that help democracy live is as important as helping suffering hostile children to become again a part of the society they despise.

We do not have a shortage because most young people have lost their idealism, as is sometimes said. They are concerned with human suffering and the grave problems of our society. They want to work in positions where they feel that their contribution is recognized as a

vital one, not easily replaced by anyone else, and they also want to be challenged by the difficulty of the work—they want intellectual stimulation and demands made on them. This idealism has led many into institutional and clinical settings. They are pioneers in a difficult environment, as Jane Addams was in the jungles of Chicago. All our agencies will have to give their social group workers the feeling that they want them—that they recognize their competence and know that when they are young they still have much to learn, yet are giving and can give a vital service.

Some of our colleagues are concerned lest social group work lose its social action focus, if it should become too professional. But social action in relation to work is a requirement wherever a social worker is. This is a demand made on all citizens. As a professional one may have increased knowledge about a specific subject, such as housing, race relations, or mental health, but social action itself is required of us as participants in a democratic society.

Being a professional social worker includes being concerned with social problems and—from professional practice and direct contact with such problems—being able to suggest some solutions. A social worker who sees the impact of poor housing knows what it means to a Negro child to experience discrimination; observes the hatred turned into delinquency growing out of limited opportunities and abuses at home and at school; sees the endless institutionalization of children, because mass agencies cannot focus on individual needs; sees many other social ills, must be an "angry" man or woman, and must be part of action to overcome those social handicaps. This applies to all social workers, whatever their specialization. Our professional organization, the NASW, has proved in past years that it recognizes this, and it is active in behalf of many such causes.

However, this does not release us from doing an honest, workmanlike job in our daily work with individuals and groups. The professional responsibility is to set ideals in the context of day-by-day problems, to be informed about them and work on them. But to work for ideals is not the role of the professional alone. We share this with all conscientious citizens. People all through the centuries have fought for justice, have lived and died for it. They have not done this for money. We do not get paid for the idealism we must maintain. We are paid for competence in practice. A good physician must be a good humanitarian, but the service he gets paid for is the way he corrects an eye defect or sets a leg. A good social group worker in a youth-serving agency, for instance, must not only have great convictions about racial

integration—he must know how to bring it about. As citizens we must fight for legislation, must participate in any social action group available to us. As professional social group workers we have a very specific role to play in the integration process. In face-to-face groups we are the ones who can help people to experience each other as distinct individuals, overcome their fear and distrust of each other, and work and play together in close proximity. Sensitive social group work helping skill will be needed for years to come, to penetrate beyond hostile and grudging compliance with the law.

We must combine sharp diagnostic skills of individuals and group interaction with our basic concern for a cause and our basic fight for it. This does not make us cold technicians. Our work must be continually permeated by a deep feeling of compassion. Saroyan in his autobiography, speaking of a man who wanted to write poetry, remarks, "As he read I felt that there was a good man, and yet I could not help wondering what would come of his writing of poems. For he was very far away from the dirt and anxiety of the world." [5] This compassion and knowledge of life is what we must add to sober, intensive knowledge and an increasingly sharp skill.

And now to sum up these considerations. It is hard to know whether one has really conveyed what one intended: the excitement of belonging to a great profession dedicated to the welfare of all people, and to one special part of it that carries great promise—one's impatience with the discouragement we sometimes show, which impedes the possibility of progress—one's impatience with the narrowness that makes us at times look at colleagues in another agency as strangers or as deserters instead of as brothers and allies—one's love for the young ones entering our work who so earnestly search for new ways in which they can be truly helpful.

It is good to question where we stand, but we must also be able to answer, and not always say, "Oh, I wonder . . ." We *can* answer. We have a great heritage of service based on justice and compassion. We not only have an increasing and widening task before us but have learned how to approach it—not perfectly, but better than ever. We do not have enough manpower, but there is more than there once was. We have differences of opinion, but enough unity so that the diversity is healthy and, one may hope, will keep us flexible. We have not achieved enough public recognition for the kind of services we give and are capable of giving; that does hamper our efforts and prevent

[5] William Saroyan, *The Bicycle Rider in Beverly Hills* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 5.

enough young people from coming into our ranks. Yet if we ourselves speak positively and with pride about social group work we will be able to overcome these handicaps.

"The only limit to our realization of tomorow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith." These are the last words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, written for his Jefferson Day address. The realization of tomorrow that we want is not just an expansion of our professional specialization, but the immense contribution it can bring to our society. What is this contribution? Individual human beings who feel the pride of self-worth and have learned to participate with others in preserving or creating a society which protects that self-worth, and the worth of everyone else, by the constant practice of intelligent and helpful group association.

Goal formation:
an organizational perspective

GEORGE BRAGER

This paper will focus upon dynamics in the formation of group work goals. The effect of diverse objectives, which are inherently laden with value conflict, will be explored, as will the consequences of the inability of group work, as a segment of the social work profession, to specify its goals and, therefore, to measure its results. A second section, drawing upon material from current organization theory, will direct attention to the influence of institutional context upon the goals of group work. The paper will conclude with an analysis of some of the factors impinging upon goal formation within a single agency.

It will be helpful to note a pervasive value conflict of the profession: the question of ends vs. means, process vs. product. Some of us define democratic leadership as "having little to do with content and subject matter, but very much with process" [1] in the hopeful notion that if the process is "right" the end will be laudable. Others agree that there is an element of reality in Friedrich Deurrenmatt's play, *The Visit,* in which a decision is reached in a small Swiss village through the most exemplary democratic participation, involving all the village institutions and its townspeople, with the most horrendously unjust result. Some might further note that our adherence to democratic process has

[1] Donald VanValen, "Community Organization—Manipulation or Group Process," in Ernest B. Harper and Arthur Dunham, eds., *Community Organization in Action* (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 489.

obscured our commitment to specific ends, and that while we pledge our allegiance to democratic values, we have neither sufficiently defined those values nor developed a content to inculcate them.

While it is one matter for the group worker to understand that he cannot impose his goals, it is quite another to avoid specifying them because of an overemphasis upon process. There is no conflict between expounding clear-cut objectives and maintaining a concern about means, nor need we fear that clarity of aim will result in rigidity of endeavor. As noted by one educator, "Sometimes we forget that ends also influence the nature of our means; the more definite we are as to what we wish to win, the less necessary will be diluting compromise and the more probable our devising of effective strategies. Ends without means are empty, but means without ends are blind." [2]

An enumeration of the aims of group work would not, of course, require untoward enterprise. Among its purposes for the group are the development of existing values toward those embodied in the democratic ethic, the broadening of capacity in the realm of co-operative activity and corporate functioning, and the development of effectiveness in group action for social improvement. Group work purposes, for the individual, might include the satisfaction of such human needs as security, acceptance, self-expression; the broadening of the individual's social attitudes and abilities; the provision of knowledge and skills in substantive areas of learning; and the development of personality.

While this is not a complete list, it may stand as a relatively inclusive statement of group work objectives. The sources underlying these aims are numerous; as Clara Kaiser has indicated, the ideological forebears of group work include, among a score of others, the progressive education movement, the settlements and their concept of neighborhood, the social reformists, psychoanalytic psychology, and the group dynamicists. [3] With such diversity, the need for considerable professional accommodation is to be expected, and the objectives of group work are here broadly drawn in order to accommodate the wide divergence in historic influence and current practice.

The breadth and diversity of group work objectives inevitably call forth conflict regarding priority for attention. Do we concentrate upon the individual or the group? Personality development or socially de-

[2] Theodore Brameld, *Ends and Means in Education* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 239

[3] Clara Kaiser. "The Social Group Work Process," in Marjorie Murphy, *The Social Group Method in Social Work Education*, Vol. 11 of the "Curriculum Study" (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1959), p. 116.

sirable ends? Psychodynamics or group dynamics? Services to the needy or to the normal? Social control or social change? One such controversy currently receiving attention is the question of whether the limited personnel resources of group work ought to be used in the "special settings" as against the traditional group service agency.

The profession's "historic mission of service to those most in need" serves as argument for advocates of the special setting [4] although to advance a different priority one might point to the historic concern for the economically underprivileged rather than the physically or emotionally handicapped. Remembering that the handicapped receive attention from other professions, we might well decide that there is greater "need" for the skills of the group worker among members of a settlement on Chicago's South Side than in a well-staffed and (because of its philanthropic appeal) well-financed rehabilitation setting. Moreover, if we were to invoke the profession's "historic mission" to ameliorate social ills, we might advocate the priority of social reform over attention to individual pathology.

While diversity of goal is not necessarily unhealthy (a case could be made for the reverse), one must be aware of its existence and possible consequences. With professional sanction for a variety of sentiments and objectives, the individual practitioner is free to choose on the basis of the most congenial line of argument. Other influences may then play a determining role. It has been said that some professionals eschew the traditional for the special setting on the ground that the latter advances the development of group work skill. One may see here, without too great license, a concern for professional status as well. It is, of course, useful to pattern one's goal and method as closely as possible after the healing sciences when it comes to professional prestige, though this may not be overwhelmingly pertinent in the matter of fixing priorities.

A further consequence of the diversity of goals is the license it provides for professional responsiveness to the social climate. In its youth and insecurity as a branch of the social work profession, and in its concern with society itself, group work is particularly subject to the forces of the shifting social scene. With a variety of goals and values, it is free to develop alternative emphases, depending upon the nature of the times. Thus, if the analysis is correct, we might expect that during periods of social change the reform aspect of the profession would be uppermost; in times of social apathy, a tendency to focus

[4] See Robert Vinter, "Group Work: Perspectives and Prospects," in *Social Work with Groups 1959* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1959), p. 135.

upon the individual; and in a restrictive social climate, a positive in-
fatuation with pathology.

While practitioners would agree with Jacob I. Hurwitz that sound
practice requires "clearly defined, theoretically based goals representing
the desired behavioral and attitudinal outcomes *formulated in specific
and concrete terms* [italics the author's]," [5] a striking characteristic of
group work goals is their lack of specifics. We have not, for example,
defined differences in aims because of differences in age, sex, or ethnic
and religious factors, nor have we translated our considerable interest
in socioeconomic variables into concrete goals.

In some measure, our lack of goal specificity may be the result of
our preoccupation with process and the conflict in values, diversity of
influence, and variations in practice to which we are heirs. The prob-
lem is further compounded by the uniqueness of human beings and the
infinitely complex nature of their behavior. Since the behavioral
sciences are in the early stage of their development, and group work a
fledgling, the attempt to make goals concrete seems indeed formidable.
The theoretical poverty of a relatively immature branch of the profes-
sion thus carries a considerable responsibility for our not so defining
our goals.

One unfavorable consequence of this has been indicated by Hurwitz,
who has noted that "if group work is to become a theoretically rooted
and illuminated field of practice, it must develop a conceptual frame-
work to guide both practice and evaluation efforts." [6] Without spe-
cific goals methodology cannot be tested and evaluation becomes a
loose and groping process. Thus professionals make judgments about
agencies, not on the basis of agency attainment of goals, but upon their
evaluation of agency method. A "good" agency is one that provides x
amount of supervisory time, or hires workers trained in a certain way,
rather than one that achieves a predetermined result.

A further consequence of aims whose achievement cannot be effec-
tively measured is to protect institutions (and practitioners) from
public scrutiny. When goals are sufficiently general so that their attain-
ment is indeterminate, lay persons are unable to evaluate the success
or failure of agency endeavor. Thus the adequate and the inadequate
are indistinguishable, with the community confused as to whether the
local "character-building" organization builds leadership or "charac-
ters." One may note parenthetically that social work researchers have

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[5] Jacob I. Hurwitz, "Systematizing Group Work Practice," *Social Work,* Vol. 1,
No. 3 (July 1956), p. 64.
[6] *Ibid.*

commented upon agency self-studies as being—whether intentionally or no—often unreliable, while objective research attempts have been resisted.

Generality of purpose serves to protect the group work professional from public control; if the goal is vague, the professional on a day-to-day basis can supply his own definitions. No board of directors or community would quarrel with an agency's aim to "develop existing values toward those embodied in the democratic ethic," although each, in making that ethic concrete, might find himself at great variance with the professional's understanding of the words. Without such concreteness the professional is free to pursue his own meanings. Indeed, a number of studies in other contexts have indicated that "to the extent that there is agreement on objectives, it is agreement on highly ambiguous goals." [7]

Another result of our lack of specific goals and consequent inability to measure the results of the group work method is a concomitant distortion of focus. With general—and usually more highly desirable—goals not amenable to measurement, it is well-nigh inevitable that the criterion of success will shift to aspects of practice that are more visibly at hand. Thus, while we cite program as a tool, sensitive leaders soon learn that supervisors weigh heavily in their evaluation the extent and kind of specific program activity. Illustrative of this point is the agency whose goal is to help members accept their ethnic or religious background. Since the goal is so general and undefined, so impossible of measurement, this aspect of the agency tends to be evaluated by the quantity (or even quality) of program that features an ethnic or religious component rather than the self-acceptance attained by membership.

One agency, concerned with anti-Semitic incidents, risked a further specification of its goals. It defined its objectives in working with a Jewish clientele as helping them (1) to recognize anti-Semitism, however subtly manifest, and whether by Jew or Gentile; (2) to perceive the problem as a problem for the prejudiced rather than the victim, and thus to avoid a distortion of self-image; (3) to hold to the right of Jews to respond as individuals, without concern for prejudicial group judgments of the larger community; (4) to attempt solutions in concert with others; and (5) to view the problem as generic to minority status rather than restricted to their group alone. While this indicates

[7] R. M. Cyert and J. G. March, "A Behavioral Theory of Organizational Objectives," in Masow Haire, ed., *Modern Organization Theory* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1959).

the possibility of making an agency's goals concrete beyond current practice, the experience demonstrated to the agency that—with its program as constituted—its ends were largely unattainable. The active intervention of staff in providing specific and focused content resulted.

The articulation of idealistic and highly desirable goals, however general, serves to excite the imagination of some, and thus to encourage a broadened and dedicated participation. While this is helpful to professional achievement, in espousing idealistic and essentially non-achievable ends we do also risk the creation of cynicism. Social workers, group workers among them, are subject to self-doubt and self-deprecation, perhaps largely as a result of expounding such unachievable goals. The problem is heightened when group work practices impinge upon others—as, for example, the maintenance department in an agency or the housemother staff of an institution. Although we may evaluate our efforts through study of methods rather than results, we cannot expect other groups to use the same criteria. The result, then, is to encourage cynicism on their part.

It follows from the above that one important criterion in the choice of a professional objective is that it should be achievable. This rather simple notion has not received the attention of the field, perhaps in part because of our avoidance of measuring results, which permits us with impunity to lay claim to a wide variety of desirable ends. If our conception of the efficacy of the group work method tends to be limitless, the possibility of actual achievement of the objective becomes a proportionately unnecessary consideration. However, even when conceptions are more modest, achievability of goal is not of course a sufficient criterion by itself for fixing priority of service. Goals, of course, ought to be set as a result of their intrinsic worth, although their attainment may be difficult. Possibility of achievement is one criterion among others to be considered.

We need to recognize further the reality that group work purpose cannot be divorced from its institutional source. In addition to the fact that there is no practice without organizational auspices, we need also to note the interrelatedness of professional and institutional influence, each upon the other. Thus, while an agency is influenced by the impact of professional consensus upon its practitioners, or by current questioning in the field (and most often we see it only this way)—so, too, is the profession influenced by its organizational complex.

The individual group worker perceives professional goals and develops his varying commitments to them, and to what they ought to be,

as a result of many influences, individual personality patterns among them. Ordinarily neglected, however (although in the view here presented especially significant), is the influence of agency setting and the location in that setting of the individual professional. We might assume, for example, that the way the group work instructor in a school of social work views the profession will be affected by such features as the academic milieu, his separation from the direct practice of group work, his concern for the beginner (student), his freedom from the strains of production, his minority role in largely casework faculties, and the relative absence of administrative and community pressures— or at least those relating to a social group work operation. One might note the difference in perception of the director of a federated fund-raising agency, or group work consultant to a powerful community chest, whose power position is responsible for his lack of opportunity to interact with other professionals as peers; whose point of reference may be the affluent lay persons with whom he communicates; and whose organizational function may be viewed as that of professional "watchdog" to protect the agency's finances.

The treatment setting provides further example. While there has been exploration of how to function effectively on a team, we have not directed sufficient attention to the implications of the increasing use of group workers within a larger institutional framework. What is the effect, for example, of the professional isolation of the group worker in such settings? What is the effect upon him of the "status deprivation" of the professional "pecking order?" One might speculate on the relationship between the answers to these questions and the fact, noted by Hyman Weiner, that "the beginning body of literature describing group work in treatment centers ignores social problems as they affect the emotionally or physically handicapped person." [8] Ginsberg and Miller in referring to the interdisciplinary setting make the further point that "modeling our behavior according to standards of another profession or developing goals more congenial to the purposes of others is not apt to serve as a reliable basis for providing services for which we are responsible and have a special competence." [9]

Ideological commitment plays an important role in worker selection of agency, although other variables are similarly important, as for

[8] Hyman J. Weiner, "Group Work and the Interdisciplinary Approach," *Social Work*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (July 1958), p. 82.

[9] Mitchell I. Ginsberg and Irving Miller, "Problems of Conformity As Faced by the Professional Worker," in *Group Work Papers 1957* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1958), p. 12.

example salary, status, personnel policies, assignment, geographic location, and availability of supervision, among others. Once the selection is made, however, we might suppose a deepening identification and value commitment to the service chosen. We would hardly expect a settlement worker to deliver a professional paper urging priority for the treatment setting, or the reverse. The organizational context will thus be a determinant in developing the professional ideology, no matter what the initial motivation of the worker. The settlement worker, the leader in the treatment setting, the director of the federated fund-raising agency, the group work instructor—each adds his voice to the professional consensus. While we would agree that variations in experience, differences in group work background, and organizational points of reference are the raw material from which collective professional learning and intelligent decision-making may result, one must take into account also the pressures stemming from the varying organizational imperatives.

If the organization is a potent force in developing professional ideology, one must add that the sentiments of the field are not the product of professionals alone, but of all the interests, professional and lay, that impinge upon the collectivity of agencies in which group work is practiced.

We might, nevertheless, reasonably assume that a collective professional opinion will be more an "outpost" opinion than the sum of the beliefs of professionals functioning within their own agencies. Whatever the effect of organizational requirements upon the practitioner's ideology, within the profession itself he is considerably more of a free agent than within his own agency. In addition, consensus is the result, not merely of the interaction of different ideas but—quite as important—of the interaction of people with differing status. Thus, among group workers instructors from the schools of social work carry considerable prestige. Since they are not responsible to, and do not communicate with, the policy-makers of social agencies, they are freer to develop "outpost" opinion. With increased status, their voice is disproportionate to their number.

We have thus far considered objectives of group work as a collectivity, with scant reference to goal-setting within the single agency. The analysis, with some modification for individual difference, is of course applicable to most of the units that make up the totality of group work services. The social agency, viewed from the perspective of organization theory, represents a coalition of varying interests. Just as the profession accommodates divergent influences, so, too, does the

single agency. If anything, the case is clearer with regard to the agency, since the common elements among group workers, because of similarities of selection, training, status, norm, and even common destiny, do not exist among the disparate groups composing the social agency. The concept of the agency as a coalition ought not to be dismissed on the grounds of obviousness, however—at least until its aspects have been understood and incorporated into the fabric of group work theory.

In considering the staff of the group service organization, we find administrative, supervisory, and leadership personnel, full- and part-time workers, paid and volunteer, maintenance, clerical, and professional, each with varying commitments, relatedness, and power to affect the goals and decision-making of the agency. So, too, among board, community, and membership we find groupings and subgroupings with special interests, degree of involvement, and differentials in influence. In order to induce the participation of these individuals and groups, agreement is, of course, necessary regarding the objectives of the agency; or at any rate an assumption of agreement, whether actual or not. At the very least, in order to maintain the agency there can be no perceived conflict between the objectives of the organization and the individual goals and motivations of its constituents. However, the assumption of agreement, or absence of perceived conflict between individual and agency goal, is quite a different thing from real unity of purpose.

Because group work agencies serve social ends, it is assumed that board members participate for humanitarian reasons. Privately, however, a wide gamut of motivation of board membership has been identified, ranging from conviction of the need for the agency's services to a desire to use membership as a steppingstone for business or personal advancement. Some board members may participate for prestige purposes, or to meet social obligations or satisfy power drives; for others it may be a case of "noblesse oblige"—one's duty to the underprivileged. Some board members represent special interest groups; others, particularly those who specialize in fund-raising, may find this an outlet for socially appreciated hostility, as in the instance of one who volunteered to solicit a fund-raising prospect with, "Let me take that s.o.b.—I'll get him to give, all right!" Board membership is, perhaps, for some businessmen the special interest most like their own business, since they relate primarily to the financial aspects of the agency's management.

Professional motivation is similarly complicated. Merton has noted

that intellectual mores require the intellectual (social worker) to view the betterment of his own economic status as a by-product rather than the immediate purpose of his activity.[10] This runs counter to the traditionally defined role of the businessman, whose primary objective is unashamedly to maximize economic return, and constitutes a difference in perspective that produces tension. For the social worker on the job because of the salary it pays, the advancement it augurs, or the learning it provides, there may be guilt in that he is not sufficiently advancing social principle; for the worker unencumbered by this doubt, there is in the conflicting mores the possibility that his integrity will be impugned—while his motivation may be principled, it can be seen as self-serving. Thus the president of one group service agency, listening to a staff report regarding agency developments in grouping, commented in undertone, "Looks like she's working on another paper for a conference!"

While the ideology of the profession exerts strong influence upon the group worker to search his own motivation and then act in response to the needs of the client group, we must recognize the reality of a converse influence. The very fact of employee status develops a pressure to protect one's position. As noted by Selznick, the employee's "interest in the ultimate purpose of the organization, or in the 'common good,' becomes subordinate to his preoccupation with the problems in the *maintenance* of his post."[11] If the status of the profession were such that the group worker held as distinctive a prestige position in his agency as does the doctor in a hospital, he would of course be less subject to the preoccupations noted by Selznick. Nevertheless, concern with career advancement can be seen as affecting a practitioner's relatedness to agency goal, whatever the pressures—or lack of them—exerted by an organization, whether social agency or hospital.

Membership aims may be as diverse as there are members who participate, although this ought not deter agencies from attempting their definition. While the limited influence of the membership group may be cited, this does not negate their very real effect upon the development of agency purpose, if only in the veto they hold through their power of withdrawal. The agency that studied membership motivation and found that a significant number of teen-agers attended "to

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10 Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (rev. ed.; Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), p. 221.

11 Quoted in David L. Sills, *The Volunteers* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), p. 65 from Philip Selznick, "An Approach to a Theory of Bureaucracy," *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 8 (1943), p. 52.

keep out of the cold" knew it had to keep its temperature high, what-
ever its objectives! There is, of course, no significant concern when
membership goals are congruent with agency goals, or at least do not
conflict. Except in the institutional field, self-selection ordinarily takes
place, with members of the community drawn to the agency as a result
of goals implicit in the type of program it offers. It need hardly be
noted that these may be quite at variance with the explicit statements
of agency objective. Self-selection, however, does not obscure the fact
that people choose to affiliate for individual purposes, although certain
agency objectives may be perceived as irritants, or worse.

Class interests affect the values, and therefore goal orientation, of
the agency's constituent groups. Sufficient study has established the
upper- and upper-middle-class nature of boards; experience confirms
that when boards are more broadly representative of the community
they serve, status and the power to influence consensus adhere to
members with greatest financial resource. On the other hand, social
workers have been drawn from the middle class, with membership
representing lower economic groups, although there are recent indi-
cations of merging between these groups as group workers are recruited
from the low middle class [12] and agency services are increasingly offered
to a more financially able membership. One would imagine the finan-
cially privileged group as most likely to be committed to a preservation
of the status quo, and thus to the support of more conservative agency
ends; while the group work professional and the financially less privi-
leged would be less so.

If the goals of individuals or groups, board, staff, or membership
harmonized with the goals of all other participants, the group service
agency would represent that uncommonly happy partnership detailed
by some of our literature. In fact, of course, it is neither possible nor
is it necessary that this be so. What is required is sufficient harmony
when individual or group goals have a direct bearing upon the pur-
poses and program of the agency; although one may note that even
when individual and group ends are inconsistent it is possible, and
has been practice, for agencies to pursue inconsistent ends at different
times. We need to recognize in addition that agency-related individual
or group goals will, as a result of processes of persuasion, bargaining,
or political maneuvering, ultimately determine the objectives of the
agency.

There are within our agency complex not only differences in indi-

[12] *See* John C. Kidneigh and Horace W. Lundberg, "Are Social Work Students
Different?" in *Social Work,* Vol. 3, No. 3 (July 1958), p. 59.

vidual and group goals, but differences in perception, access to information, involvement, and commitment as well. The fact that these differences are not totally idiosyncratic needs underscoring, since our tendency has been to define differentials in individual terms rather than as a consequence of social structure. One might expect, for example, that the part-time leadership staff of an agency would be less devoted to its objectives than the full-time professional. From the purely quantitative aspect, their exposure to agency influence is circumscribed by the number of hours they serve. Their agency role, as distinct from that of the full-time worker, is not their major role, and they are first mothers, housewives, teachers, students. Their work serves to supplement income, rather than to provide basic living requirements or to advance a career. In such circumstances commitment to agency goal may be less compelling, and although it may not be articulated in these terms, the field has developed a varied set of techniques to impose relatedness to agency purposes.

The most significant differential of constituent agency groups, however, is their varying degree of power. Whatever our theory regarding democratic participation in decision-making, the influence of membership as a group is less than is the influence of either board or staff. We would not, of course, ascribe this to differences in the personalities of those who happen to be members of an agency as contrasted to those who happen to serve on its board. In addition to what must inevitably follow from a board's inherent legal responsibility, the status, and therefore influence, of people is differently felt, depending upon whether they are the contributors to a service or recipients of it, and this is true whether the one who perceives happens to be the contributor or the recipient. The size of the membership group, as compard to the other constituent groups, is a factor: the larger the group, the less its cohesiveness; the less the cohesiveness, the more unlikely the development of a climate for concerted action. The extent to which individuals within a group have opportunity to interact will also affect the group's ability to develop sufficient common interests and resolve to influence the making of decisions. With most membership groups dispersed and relatively noninteracting (except during incidents of crisis), the latent power of large numbers remains untapped.

Even in instances where membership is structurally represented in the decision-making apparatus of the agency, either through a house council or by participation upon the board, we may question the extent of the participating members' "representativeness." It is likely, although admittedly not inevitable, that those chosen are upwardly

striving members, or at least the type of member who enjoys and can participate within the structured setting of a committee and board. Yet this has by no means been established, and there is evidence for the reverse—that at least in lower income groups the leaders of the community do not function within the formalized structures.[13]

An analysis of the dynamics of power within group service agencies requires more detailed exploration than is possible here. Factors such as legal responsibility, status differentials, group cohesion, and inter-action patterns within a group have been referred to in the example above. Equally significant would be hierarchical arrangements within the agency, the size of its operation, its communications systems, the intensity of individual and group involvements, and the composition of informal groupings and subgroupings. The extent to which roles are differentiated and functions defined also serves to circumscribe the areas within which individuals and groups can exert influence.

Merton contends that the demands and expectations in one's social position shape one's behavior, and that the client of the intellectual in a bureaucracy (*i.e.*, the board of the executive) will play a significant role in the development of the intellectual's attitude.[14] Indeed when we reflect that the board hires the professionals (frequently in its own image) and has the explicit or latent power to fire them, and the right of unlimited questioning; that the board evaluates the executive's performance and in innumerable ways can make his work more difficult or more satisfying; we recognize the disproportionate power of the board vis-à-vis other agency groups.

It is possible that the boards of group service agencies exert even more influence upon goal-setting within their organizations than do boards of family and children's agencies or those of other social welfare institutions. Since goal and method are oftentimes difficult to dis-tinguish, and the separation of policy formulation, adoption, and ex-ecution impossible to delineate clearly, specifying areas of responsibility of board and staff has not been simple. Neal Gross, in a study of superintendents and school boards in Massachusetts, notes wide dis-crepancy between the two regarding their conception of the proper functions of each.[15] Given the relative smallness of group service organizations, staff will be more observable and more subject to the pressures of other groups. Since the service is perceived as less compli-

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[13] *See* the analysis by William Foote White, *Street Corner Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

[14] Merton, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

[15] Neal Gross, *Who Runs Our Schools?* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), p. 124.

cated, thus requiring less *expertise,* it is to be expected that lay involvement will be less clearly differentiated. While the hospital board member would not presume to evaluate the surgeon, the board member of a group service agency may well see himself as an expert in group relations. The problem is further complicated by the community orientation of group service, which, in being uniquely fraught with value implications, calls forth the greater attentiveness of the board member.

External to the agency, but pertinent to the influence system that affects its goal-setting and decision-making, are community groups which define areas of agency activity as within their purview. Thus, veterans' organizations appoint themselves watchdogs of patriotism, and real estate associations of housing matters. Religious leaders and groups bring pressure in areas of special interest to them, as do political parties, business dealers, fraternal associations, and adult organizations of various sorts. Some are impelled by ideological commitment, others by competing organizational self-interest. While their influence varies with the fluctuations of time, issues, and the power of the group, one may guess that outside pressures correlate highly with the extent to which an agency is involved in community activity.

One might draw from this a bleak view regarding goal-formation by group service agencies. There is little incentive to specify goals if generality and consequent immeasurability protect us from the public eye, internal disagreement, the definitions of lay persons, and possibilities of failure. On the other hand, our view of the agency as a coalition of diverse interests draws attention to the confusions, conflicts, and differences with which we are beset. A final discouragement is that, with differences harmonized and goals specified, agency objectives may still be subverted by the very rules and procedures instituted for their achievement, since rules often become their own justification. Developed for reasons apart from the attainment of particular objectives, they tend to be maintained when conditions alter whatever usefulness they originally had.

We need not be disheartened, however, even if, instead of providing answers, our questioning results in new unrest. Effective strategy to meet professional goals can be devised only in relation to what exists, no matter how unpleasant; it cannot derive from theory that deals only with what is desired. The goals of a group service agency are not static or fixed, and can be varied by recruitment of personnel, board, and even membership. Procedures devised by the agency also have an effect upon the formulation, as well as achievement, of goals.

Most important, however, is the recognition that the value orienta-

tion of the profession must be developed in accommodating psychological, organizational, and social realities. While professional influence is circumscribed, it can be heightened by increased knowledge, commitment, and willingness to risk the use of influence already possessed. The task is to foster that influence within the agency coalition, so that goals congenial to the value system of social work may be specified and attained.

Use of group work
skills with short-term groups

LOUISE SHOEMAKER

Man is beginning to conquer space—to feel at home with the reality of travel faster than sound and the infinite dimensions of the universe.

> *But time escapes him; time is unleashed terror;*
> *he is an animal obsessed by time.*
> *He has no instrument to hold it with*
> *except his counted pulse, his measured breath.*[1]

If man cannot hold time—which would itself be deadly—how can he learn to use it?

In social work we have to help people within time, and in some way we must come to terms with time for ourselves and for the people we serve. In this paper we will explore two things relating to our use of time: (1) some of the present uses of short-term groups, and (2) the particular group work skills brought into play in working with short-term groups.

Certainly in the group-serving agencies group workers have used time consciously. We speak of the program year. We plan with a group for programing around holidays and seasons of the year. We meet at a regular time for an agreed-upon length of time. But our pace has been relatively leisurely, and rightly so, as we have related

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[1] Edith Henrich, "Space and Time," in *The Quiet Center* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1946).

our services to the developmental processes of persons of all ages. We say it takes time—and indeed it does—for maturation, for normal growth and development.

Yet there are times in the life span of a group or special groups formed around a central purpose in which a short period of even a few weeks of intensive work can accomplish more than if one had all the time in the world. Virginia Robinson as long ago as 1932 wrote of the meaning of time to the caseworker:

> When the caseworker has really taken the measure of the little she can ever do for another person, even in unlimited time and with infinite skill, and of the amount he can do for himself when he wills to do it, then I think she begins to value the briefest contact in which sometimes, so surprisingly, the little can happen which makes it possible for the other person to go ahead to his own solution of the problem.[2]

Can this be true for the group worker also? Is a one-time meeting with a group of public assistance applicants group work? Are eight weekly sessions with a group of mental hospital patients group work? Are they social work at all? This writer believes that all the necessary components for group work can be present in a short-term contact with a group as surely as all the necessary components for giving casework help may be present for the worker helping the Travelers Aid client. Grace Coyle writes:

> I am inclined to include the use of any group experience (as group work)—large or small, fleeting or permanent, in club, class or council. I have been led into thinking of this by the case work experience with the so-called short contact interview. I believe something similar happens in large or temporary groups where short time or apparently superficial relations may be extremely significant for the participants.[3]

She goes on to say that her definition of group work would include "the conscious use of the group experience for the development of persons." This conscious use of the group experience, stimulated and directed by a social worker, we will take here as a criterion for group work in describing work with short-term groups.

First of all, why have short-term groups? Is there a real need for them? We have traditionally worked with groups that have a naturally

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[2] Virginia Robinson, "Treatment Possibilities in Short Interview Contacts," *Visiting Teacher Bulletin*, Vol. 8 (October 1932).

[3] Grace Coyle, "Not All Group Activities Are Group Work," in Dorothea Sullivan, ed., *Readings in Group Work* (New York: Association Press, 1952), p. 201.

imposed time limit. Summer camping is perhaps the most familiar of these and is the short-term group situation that has been most explored in practice and theory. The group formed to plan a special program or event is also familiar to us all. Less familiar are the legally time-limited group in the penal institution, the medically time-limited group in the hospital, and the educationally time-limited group in the school, in which, if we wish to work with them at all, we must reckon with the limited time available to us.

In the group-serving agency we have also experienced the group formed around a problem: parents demanding safety for their children in attending the agency, meeting several times with staff to work through this problem; boys identified as those involved in a break-in, pulled out of their various groups to meet with a worker around this specific problem. We have recognized the dynamic of the common problem, the urgency of the immediate concern, in these pieces of life to help groups. In using reality in this way, relationships are strengthened and deepened with persons already known to the agency, and a vital beginning is made with those who are new. Alan Klein points out the growing use of "group curricula" as a means of effecting positive change in individuals and suggests that the group centered around a common task or problem may be, in many instances, a more effective medium for change than the well-knit friendship group.[4]

We should be transferring our knowledge of group method and group work skills to other settings, for the use of groups in non-group-serving agencies is growing rapidly. A survey of 291 non-group-service agencies in the Washington-Baltimore area shows that, during the calendar year of 1958, 36 of these agencies had "growth-oriented groups with graduate caseworkers acting as leaders." [5] There is much in the current literature about the use of groups in family and children's agencies.[6] You will go a long way, however, to find any mention of social group work in this context. It is "casework-oriented group treatment," "group counseling," "casework with groups"—in short, anything but social group work. One of the aims of this paper is to

[4] Alan Klein, "Individual Change Through Group Experience," in *The Social Welfare Forum, 1959* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 151.

[5] Joyce G. Klein, "Growth-Oriented Groups in Case Work Agencies," June 1959. Abstract from unpublished doctoral dissertation, Catholic University, Washington, D. C.

[6] For examples *see* Gertrude J. Conrad and Harry K. Elkins, M.D. "The First Eighteen Months of Group Counseling in a Family Service Agency," *Social Casework*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (March 1959), pp. 123–129, or Sanford N. Sherman, "Utilization of Casework Method and Skill in Group Counseling," *Casework Papers, 1958* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1958).

make clear that this whole area of helping people in and through groups is a valid one for the use of social group work method and skills.

Supplementing casework services with group work services, we have found short-term groups filling such purposes as helping a group to focus on and work through a common problem, providing a helping experience for clients inaccessible to individual help, and observing clients in a new setting. The author's own experience with short-term groups, in addition to camping, has been in a public welfare agency and a state mental hospital. The public welfare client or mental hospital patient is often able to plan for only a short time ahead. For him to break the fearful interminableness of time into manageable pieces by planning for eight or ten weeks is, indeed, a giant step. There are, therefore, not only outer pressures limiting time, but inner pressures which can be just as demanding and just as difficult to deal with. Situations demand working with people within a limited time, and people demand this also.

Several factors must be taken into consideration in planning for and working with a short-term group. These include clarity of purpose for the group, focus of content, preparation of membership; structuring the group as to size, number of meetings, and so forth; and the group worker's skill in certain areas.

The purpose of the group must include concerns of such vital importance to the potential group members that a connection with it, even if negative, will be almost inevitable. Also, the purpose must so grow out of agency function in relation to these members and their problems that the pressures and demands put on them in relation to the group—the use of their time, their involvement and movement in the group—are valid ones for which agency and worker can be held accountable. In forming a group of unmarried mothers receiving Aid to Dependent Children grants in public assistance, for example, the public welfare agency has the right to discuss the clients' promiscuous behavior with them only because of the fact that, in accepting public assistance, they have agreed to "maintain a suitable home" for their children, and the mother's behavior is a contributing factor in whether the home is or is not suitable. What their behavior means to them as individuals is, of course, a primary point of discussion, but the over-all focus must be on the children and what the mother's behavior means to them.

The purpose and goals for the short-term group must be realistic within the time available. Each group experience should carry its own

validity and extension into the future for each member. The goals for the camping group, for example, need to be such that they can be reached within the camping experience, without further contact with the members. Paul Simon calls this a transitory group.

> It will be in existence for a short period in the life experience of an individual. The transitory group should be expected to achieve only that amount of group spirit required for the particular setting within which it is found. Therefore, its values need to be examined in the light of their meaning for the individual rather than their effect upon group wholeness.[7]

On the other hand, the main goal for a group of mothers concerned with the problem of living on a public assistance grant might be to help each one gain the strength necessary to begin long-term planning in casework, following the group experience. In the mental hospital, the short-term group has been found to be an ideal medium for planning by patients for their parole or release. Here the group experience encompasses the goal of almost total planning by the patients.[8]

The transitory nature of the group, however, does not detract from the importance of the members' identification with the group as a whole. Helen U. Phillips says of this,

> If personal, individual strength and self-value are to be gained from participation in the group, there must be an awareness of common focus among the members and identification of each one present with the others as a member of the given, specific group. Hence, the worker's purpose includes helping the group members to establish themselves as a group unit, although temporary in nature.[9]

The preparation of members for an intensified short-term group experience has been clearly demonstrated in the use of preparation for camping. Meeting cabin group members before camp; a manual, a map, lists of things to do and to get, are all helpful in making the experience concrete and in channeling natural anxieties and uncertainties constructively. But the main factor, of course, is the relationship built up through working on these tasks and preparing for this experience. Some of the wish to try it—the thrust to a new experi-

[7] Paul Simon, "Social Group Work in Camping," in *The Social Welfare Forum, 1952* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 198.

[8] Else Jockel and Harry Citron, "Promoting Social Recovery of State Hospital Patients Through the Group Process," *Journal of Social Work Process*, Vol. 7 (1956), pp. 97–110.

[9] Helen U. Phillips, *Essentials of Social Group Work Skill* (New York: Association Press, 1957), p. 155.

ence—must be derived from faith in the service of the agency and in the worker who offers it.

> Mrs. Woods recalled how timid she felt when she first came to Protective Services and how frightened she was when I discussed the group with her. She did not know then how she would make out, but she had faith in what she had already gotten in Protective Services and so, she would try the group experience.

Structuring the group—time and place of meetings, the length of meetings or of the camping session, the number and selection of group members—all these are mutually interrelated with the purpose for the group and the goals within that purpose. Detailed consideration of these is not within the scope of this paper, but some will be touched on in the discussion of the use of group work skills.

Paul Simon also speaks of the acceleration of the group process in camping because the group is together so much in the living situation.[10] This acceleration of group process can also be accomplished in other short-term groups through the skill of the group worker.

Among the skills of the group worker, three are of primary importance in accelerating group process in the short-term group. These are: (1) communication and use of feeling, (2) the use of time as a reality factor, and (3) helping the group make decisions. The agency and group purpose provide the steady focus for the use of feelings, time, and the process of making decisions. The agency and group purpose are the necessary and known framework within which the worker can move with freedom to use these skills responsibly and creatively.

"In the group work process, it is the worker's responsibility to initiate the process of communication."[11] The worker's skill in helping to evoke a feeling response is an integral part of his skill in relating the members to the purpose of the group. If, indeed, the group members have an "ego commitment"[12] in the purpose of the group, the programing must be within that purpose. The topics for discussion, activities, the suggestions of the worker, or the limits to which the worker holds the members' suggestions and discussion—all must be kept within the purpose of the group. If there is to be change in behavior and attitudes, the members' feelings around the core problems of the group must be helped to find expression and constructive use. In the short-term group this can begin in the first group meeting.

[10] Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 198.
[11] Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
[12] Klein, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

From the first meeting of a group of mothers receiving ADC comes the following quote:

> During this meeting, the two main topics were (1) the difficulties of each mother in relating to her caseworker, and (2) their difficulty in accepting the absence requirement of the agency. The interrelatedness of these two problems came out in their expression of problem around their relationships in general. Their feelings of fear, inadequacy, and hostility in relationship came out, particularly around their relationship to their former husband or the father of their children. There was resistance to this, as they put their problems out on everything but themselves. Gradually, however, they were able to see that they do have some responsibility for where they are and what they are doing. They also struggled against accepting anything good in themselves, until they were able to recognize this in each other and to find the commonness of their problems and goals.

Sometimes, of course, there is so much anxiety around the central problem that a frontal attack is not possible. In another mother's group, there had been real enthusiasm about planning to discuss what it meant to them to receive public assistance and how they felt about the agency. In the following meeting, however,

> . . . after a while I said it seemed to me that something had happened since last week. At that time, when I had mentioned assistance, there had been angry remarks and some very bitter things said. This is totally lacking this week. Mrs. Bennett said she, too, felt nothing was happening today. I said perhaps they felt I couldn't really help them at all. Mrs. Ashton said thoughtfully, "No, it really helps to come here and talk things over." Mrs. Parsons said that she felt free to talk about anything here and did not fear that this would get outside the group. There was a general feeling that nothing much had happened today, and at one point Mrs. Bennett said, "Poor Miss K! She is trying to keep us on one thing at a time, and we're giving her a hard time today." I laughed with them and said they certainly were having a hard time talking about receiving assistance. As we got up to leave, Mrs. Ashton said, with great feeling, "Now we're on top and they're on the bottom." I asked her whom she meant by "they." She said she meant the Welfare and I said, pointing at myself, "I'm Welfare, too, you know." "No," she said, "you're the middleman." I pointed out to all of them how deeply they do feel about the agency and expressed the hope that we could really discuss this next week.

The worker's skill in holding the group to a true expression of feeling around the purpose is, of course, only possible when the worker

uses his own feelings genuinely and responsibly, "centering them on the group members' need to know and experience reality of genuine emotion from another." [13]   The feeling expressed within the group becomes a reality which the group members can own and on which they can move.

> Mrs. Brown described, with increasing vehemence, that she has no feeling for her children and realizes that this is not the way a mother should act or feel.   Then Mrs. Stewart gave an illustration of how she had told her boy to do something, and I used this to ask if they felt anyone changed his behavior by being told what to do.   There were answers indicating understanding on various levels.   Finally, Miss Light said that she felt one had to feel differently before one could be different.   The women nodded at this.   I wondered what had happened here in our group.   Here, we had been able to speak of the good and the bad in each of us without being shocked.   We had now been able to feel with some of the bad things Mrs. Brown said about herself.   Mrs. Cramer said that Mrs. Brown had been very honest with us and this was certainly in her favor.   Miss Stewart said that Mrs. Brown has a good sense of humor.   Instead of threatening Mrs. Brown, this seemed to reassure her.   As I sensed this, I said that she had already shown us a different side of herself; she could no longer say that she is all bad because we had seen something different. The women gravely nodded at this.

As the worker helps the members to find security with each other in the problems and experiences they all share, their expression of feeling becomes more purposeful and responsible.   The anger around an agency policy can be borne and can even be helpful, if there is genuine understanding of the policy.   Trust in worker and agency are possible when there is real trust in the self, supported and strengthened by the group.   Joy and pride and enthusiasm find proper expression, along with the fear and hurt which so many feel.   In evaluating what the group experience had meant to her, a mother in the Protective Services remarked, "I have attended every night and have never been to any group meetings where you could talk about your problems and feel like everyone cared."

> She acknowledged that she had little formal education and knew that she often used the wrong word, but no one in the group had laughed at her.   She said her children have tried to help her with the selection of words and she had rehearsed at home, but when she got to the group meeting, words just came to her and she said

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[13] Phillips, *op. cit.,* p. 97.

them. She went on to say how much happier life was for her and her family now.

The second group work skill for emphasis is how the worker can help his group come to terms with time, for not all the feeling is so positive, and some of the negative feeling that comes out in the short-term group concerns time. The problem of time has many aspects for the individual member, as well as for the particular setting or service where the group is formed. The planning committee member feels he just does not have time to meet once a week for six weeks. The parent in After Care Service sees a year of having to come regularly to the agency stretching endlessly ahead of him. The timelessness of the institution is vividly described by Thomas Mann in *The Magic Mountain*.

> We walk, walk. How long, how far? Who knows? Nothing is changed by our pacing. There is the same as here. Once on a time the same as now, or then; time is drowning in the measureless monotony of space, motion from point to point is no more motion, where uniformity rules; and where motion is no more motion, time is no longer time.[14]

But all of us must, as Mann goes on to say, reckon with the fact that "time, however weakened the subjective perception of it has become, has objective reality in what it brings to pass." [15] The hair becomes gray, the children grow up, the rent must be paid, or it is time to leave the hospital; somehow each must come to terms with time.

The worker can help the group discover it *can* accomplish something valuable in one meeting or six or eight meetings together.

> One of the parents added that by the time a boy is 15, you can't expect him to change. I asked them why we were working with them, who were adults. I said we already see ways in which they have changed, each one of them. At this they nodded, and Mr. Meyers said he could see what I meant—but held out that we could not expect him to change much.

In another group a father who had resented coming to the agency as a waste of time, at the end of the group experience said

> ... he had been forced into the group and now he was being forced out of the group when he didn't want it to end, but no one could take from him what he had gained in this time. He had made a list of topics discussed throughout the eight-week period and commented on the importance he felt in relation to each one. He had

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[14] Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 547.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 544.

not forgotten our first meeting, in which Mrs. Rosetti told how her son Bobby had gotten to the Department of Education to get himself enrolled in school. He remembered that I had pointed out that Bobby may have felt the support of the community and our agency and this might have given him the courage to go on. He had thought of this many times, and what it is like to know that someone important is on your side. He related this to the group participation and how it had been for him in expressing his problems in the group, knowing that the whole group was concerned and that he did not have to carry his burden alone.

I hardly need point out how valuable the sense of beginnings and endings, the purposefulness of time, can be for the institutionalized person. Many patients, hospitalized for as many as fifty years, are immobilized no longer by mental illness but by social chronicity. They have used the eight sessions of a preparole group to find and fight their way back to enough social health to leave the hospital or to assess that they need a little more time before leaving.

The worker's own perception of time must be keen and attuned to accelerating the group process even while helping the group to move at a pace that is possible and realistic. Within the total short-term group experience the timing must be used sensitively and purposefully. The beginning, middle, and ending phases encompass the potential for the use of time. The beginning phase is probably shorter in relation to the total process than in the group lasting over months or a year. Here, the worker's skill in helping the members to relate quickly and with feeling to the purpose of the group accelerates the beginning phase.

The middle phase, when there is a deepening of feeling and sharing, in point of view of time occupies the greatest number of meetings if a good beginning has been made. Here, again, the worker's conviction in carrying this service communicates itself to the group in terms of "True, this may be a short time, but this is all the time we have. So let's use it in the best way possible."

The ending phase is often difficult in the short-term group, no less than in other groups. The members who were reluctant to begin are now reluctant to end. In working through the ending with the group no academic problem needs to be posed. Ending is real, and here, too, the group can be helped to come to terms with time. Indeed, the acceleration of the group experience seems to add to the intensity of feelings. The level of participation and involvement can be so intense that it could hardly be sustained over a long period of time. The worker can help the group to an awareness of this by using it in the

separation and ending process to help the members value the group experience for itself and then to step out on their own into other relationships and groups with a sense of gain.

One of the most difficult but most rewarding services in which we have worked with a short-term group in the Baltimore Department of Public Welfare has been with groups of applicants in the Aid to Dependent Children category. Here, with the tremendous pressure of only two hours for the whole group experience, the same time phases of beginning, middle, and ending can be used to give form to the experience. A condensation of such a group meeting with seven members will help point out what is possible even in this shortest of short-term groups.

> In answer to the question "What is ADC and why are you applying for it?" we had discussion around the purpose of the program, the client's responsibility and agency responsibility. Two women in the group had received assistance before and gave helpful comments on what they feel ADC is. Mrs. Harris was able to say that she felt she did not need to change her life a great deal because she was receiving assistance—what she felt was important for her children were the same things that the agency said were important for them. This included keeping them well fed and well clothed and housed. Mrs. Evans, the other person who had received ADC, said the agency made them suffer. We looked at what they meant by suffering, what it is that makes them anxious and afraid, and what the agency can do to help them with this. In the discussion, it came out that they are very fearful and even angry, but some said that talking together like this was a help.
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> We discussed what is meant by good physical care of children, and I said that we would trust them as adults to continue to give their children this care. We found that, in many cases, mothers responded well to having the worker come in to look at their home, and that in most homes the children were well cared for. Mrs. Harris said she found this to be true—she wanted her worker to feel proud of her children and of her. The others responded, saying that they could see how this might be and that they wanted the best things possible for their children.
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> We discussed their need for assistance, the eligibility requirements, and what is expected of them in getting work or in staying at home with their children. Around establishing need, there were many bitter comments about husbands. I said that they, the mothers, were taking responsibility in caring for their children and we, on our part, wanted to help them in giving financial assistance and other help as it is needed. Even though their husbands may have acted irresponsibly, they, the mothers, are showing themselves to be responsible, and we want to deal with them on this basis. This is one of the reasons they are given a cash pay-

ment, leaving to them how the money is spent. There was a lot of head-nodding at this and Mrs. Harris spoke of her experience in a positive way.

Mrs. Wilson asked if a woman could get married while she was receiving assistance. This led into a long discussion of the absence requirement, boy friends, their relationships in general, and what kinds of situations have led to the rejection of applications. Mrs. Wilson described her own case, in which her application had been rejected. She said that her boy friend, whom she is unable to marry now, comes to her home to pick up their baby and takes care of the baby while she attends night school. This arrangement had not been approved by our applications worker and she wanted to know if I thought it would be approved now. I said that it seemed she had to face a very difficult decision, which she might want to talk over with her boy friend, but that we were saying that she would have to decide which comes first for her— the children or her boy friend. I said it looked as if she wanted to have her cake and eat it too. She did not get angry, but laughed a little, along with the others, and said she guessed that was what she really wanted.

I described the responsibility they would have in reporting any changes of income to the agency. This too would not be easy, and there was real understanding of the need to report changes. Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Evans said that it was very hard to do, although they could understand why it had to be done. This led into a discussion of their financial responsibilities and we cleared up some misconceptions about the kinds of things they are allowed to have—for example, TV sets or refrigerators.

I asked them to look at their appointment slips and we went over the things they would need to bring with them to prove their eligibility. Then we filled out the necessary forms together.

The optimum use of the time phases of the group process, as well as the many other concerns around the group, forces a continuous evaluation of where the group is and where each individual member is. With greater experience, it should eventually be possible to add to the knowledge of the field by refining much more what can be accomplished in the short-term group.[16]

The third group work skill of particular importance in working with the short-term group is that of helping a group in the process of making decisions. Keeping so strictly to limits within the purpose of the group can be viewed as a straitjacket for making decisions, or it can be viewed and used as a piece of life within which vital decisions can be made. It is a piece of life because it is realistic in setting limits,

16 Jacob I. Hurwitz, "Systematizing Social Group Work Practice," *Social Work*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1956), pp. 63–69.

and it can be used creatively because it *is* life and there is no single, ready answer.

For the individual there are many choices and decisions to be made along the way. There must be choices; there must be decisions. As A. Delafield Smith puts it, in *The Right to Life,*

> If you would develop a sense of responsibility in individuals, you would do well to put them in situations which they fully dominate and the outcome of which thus depends entirely on the decisions they themselves make . . . . all ethical action is, by its very nature, voluntary action, that is, willed by the individual himself.[17]

There is, first, the choice of group service or individual service. For each of the groups described here, patients and clients have had this choice. There is the choice for each one of how he will use this service and how he will connect with the choices in the programing. The individual decisions each must make range all the way from deciding what one shall wear to the group meeting, to whether one's children are to live at home or in foster care.

For the group worker, however, the decisions made by the group as a whole are most uniquely within his area of skill. Planning together what will be the focus of discussion for the next meeting or even within one meeting—deciding which of several interests to pursue—these are one kind of group decision. The results of this are so obvious that the transfer of this knowledge to members' problems of talking things over at home or planning together with the caseworker is often an immediate consequence of the group experience. Sometimes trying to reach a decision as a group stirs up conflict in important areas. In an after-care parents' group, for example, the group was trying to decide whether it should invite the worker of some of the children to meet with the parents' group.

> Mrs. Morris said she felt it could be dangerous for us to invite the children's own caseworker. We discussed what she meant by dangerous and I said that if we did invite the worker, we would, of course, tell the children about this. With great surprise and an expression of disbelief that I could be so naïve, Mrs. Johnson wanted to know why the children would have to be told. I tried to explain the basis of trust on which we must work. Mrs. Johnson said that her boy lies so much, she knows he cannot be trusted. I asked the group how I could trust them. How would I know they are telling me the truth? They smiled sheepishly and Mrs.

17 A. Delafield Smith, *The Right to Life* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), p. 72.

Johnson admitted that we would have to trust each other to be able to go on together.

The reality of the community is brought in as the group struggles to come to a decision. At the same time as there is the security of acceptance by the group, the group voices the demands of society. It is seldom necessary for the worker to point out what the community demands in terms of parental responsibility or individual behavior. Indeed, the worker must often soften the impact of these demands with qualifications and partialize them so that they are bearable.

The area for group decisions in the short-term group is necessarily limited, but what could have broader implication than the decision of parents to work together on how they can really be parents to their children? Or what could be more freeing than a group of patients helping each other to move out of a mental hospital?

These three group work skills, then—the communication and use of feeling in the group, the use of time as a reality factor, and the process of making decisions in the group—are crucial in working with the short-term group. They gain their importance, not from any random wish on the part of the worker to give something, or on the part of the agency to prove to the client that it is there to help. These skills are crucial because they help realize the agency and group purpose; they are important because through them the worker can help the group members make a responsible and appropriate investment of themselves in a decisive experience.

> Chesterton says that a man can make only one great discovery, namely, that there are other persons in the world besides himself. The subtlest way of evading this discovery of the other person is the way of abstraction . . . a bleak theory . . . a policy of State or a scheme of a charity organization which raises the standard of living and leaves untouched the quality of life.[18]

In working with groups we must do more than abstract and theorize; instead, we must help to make abstract policies and regulations become real and useful limits for real people. We can use time purposefully in helping people who are confused and fearful to mobilize their strength in using the immediacy of the present to live more productively. In short-term groups we *can* help persons make the discovery of the other. In evaluating what the group had meant to them, a married couple had this to say.

[18] A. C. Craig, "The Other Person," in John Baillie, ed., *A Diary of Readings* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 238.

Mr. Stewart said he didn't know exactly what it is that is different in the group, but he knows there is a difference. His wife assisted him by saying she thought it takes courage at first to come to the group, but once you participate, the group seems to give you courage. She said she found it hard to get started, but she doesn't have such a "tied-up feeling" now. I was amazed at this from Mrs. Stewart, but did not say anything. She sensed my feelings, however, and added, "Yes, it's me."

By working with a group in such a way that the discovery of the "other" is possible, we can help each member find and posit a self of integrity and worth.

Some principles of intergroup relations as applied to group work

ELEANOR L. RYDER

Group work agencies, like other institutions of our culture, share in the "American dilemma" of conflict between democratic ideals and undemocratic practices. Since World War II, and more especially since the Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools, there has been an increasing effort on the part of many agencies to bring their practices more in line with the democratic ideal by serving people of different backgrounds and/or by using the agency experience to help group members learn to get along with people who are different. This frequently brings the agency into conflict with the values and customs of the community it serves, and at this point it may need to seek help from the field of intergroup relations.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine what group workers need to know about intergroup relations in order to be helpful. It should be noted that the term "intergroup" is used here in the sociological sense, referring to relationships between people of different races, religions, or national origins rather than in the social work sense of reference to a process between organized groups. The illustrations are taken from agencies moving from an all-white or biracial program into one that is integrated; the principles, however, apply to any group work setting involved with any kind of intergroup differences.

The philosophical base of group work has been described most

clearly by that dean of social group work philosophers, Grace Coyle. In the *Social Work Year Book 1954* she says:

> Its distinct characteristics lie in the fact that group work is used in social relationships within group experience as a means to individual growth and development, and that the group worker is concerned in developing social responsibility and active citizenship for the improvement of democratic society.[1]

In *Group Work with American Youth,* Miss Coyle states six assumptions about the group worker and his value system. In summary, she says that he needs

1. A firm conviction of the value educational and recreational activities can yield both to the individual and to society.
2. An awareness of two simultaneous streams of activity within groups—the progress of program activities and the interplay of social relationships.
3. A recognition of the effect of program on individuals.
4. An ability to provide for the differing needs and interests of the members.
5. An understanding of behavior.
6. The ability to function professionally.[2]

In our discussion here, we shall deal with three aspects of the group work method which have proved especially significant in the application of some of the basic principles of intergroup relations. These are (1) group formation, (2) professional leadership, and (3) program planning.

Group Formation

John Dean and Alex Rosen have suggested a number of factors related to resistance to desegregation which also affect group formation.[3] They point out that desegregation is more readily accepted in new groups than in those having precedents. It is more generally accepted by small children than teen-agers, especially if the latter belong to groups that are coed and social. There is less resistance on the part of formed groups than in natural friendship groups, and by open membership groups or groups formed by staff assignment than in

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[1] Grace L. Coyle, "Social Group Work," *Social Work Year Book 1954* (New York: American Association of Social Workers, 1954), p. 480.

[2] Grace L. Coyle, *Group Work with American Youth* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948).

[3] John P. Dean and Alex Rosen, *A Manual of Intergroup Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

those that control membership. One-sex groups and those oriented to a special activity are more accepting of desegregation than coed or club-oriented groups. Outside reference groups and neighborhood patterns will influence the group member, but a favorable orientation toward American creed values and identification with a group that is amenable to desegregation may help the most reluctant member to accept it.

Keeping these facts in mind, how does an agency staff solve the problems of group formation in a desegregating situation?

In the first place, agency members accustomed to a segregated program, whether monoracial or biracial, will probably resist change—and if they are sophisticated in the ways of the agency and the ideals of the persons trying to bring it about, a too-abrupt confrontation may quite justifiably bring forth a charge of being "undemocratic." If the matter is put to a membership vote while there is resistance, it will almost certainly be defeated. This, then, is where the group worker needs all his skill to help the group participate constructively in a consideration of the problem and its solution. He must remember to start where the members are and to proceed at a pace that is meaningful to them. If more resistance is found among friendship groups, teen-age coed groups, social groups, or closed groups, then agency desegregation should not begin there. Using Dean and Rosen's points as guides, we recognize that it is better to begin with activity groups, newly formed groups, open-membership groups, or pre-teen groups.

Does this mean that agency desegregation is accomplished piece-meal, and that there are different standards for different parts of agency program? Not necessarily. This appearance can be avoided if a comprehensive plan for the total agency is worked out in advance. The *rate* at which the plan becomes fully implemented may vary from one setting to another, but not the basic principles of democracy on which the plans are based. A flexible plan makes it possible for group workers to carry out their jobs in such a way that they neither let the majority group members withdraw with a feeling that they are being pushed out by the minority, nor do they frighten away—or fail to attract—the minority people whom they desire to bring into the program.

To summarize this matter of group formation, the group worker needs to see that in a program of integration there is a place both for friendship groups and for formed groups. Formed groups organized around a particular activity should be open to members of both races, and interracial participation should be encouraged. If the friendship

groups prove to be segregated, the worker may need help to avoid letting his own anxiety get in the way of making this a good experience. If he can handle himself professionally in this situation—if he can understand this behavior as an expression of community patterns and a need for peer-group support in a time of change—he will see this kind of group as a necessary first step in the broader socialization of the members, and will be able to help them use it in this fashion.

Professional Leadership

One of the roles of the group worker with children and youth is to be the adult with whom the members can identify in a helpful, constructive way. This process of identification has a special significance in an agency engaged in desegregation. In the first place, it is only through the process of identification that a group member can take on the democratic values that the agency is eager to have him incorporate. He cannot be forced to accept them, and in a community where more or less segregated patterns have been the practice he will probably place a negative value on interracial participation. Often his reaction will be more emotional than logical. It is important, therefore, for the leader to be able to demonstrate his own beliefs to the members by his actions at the same time that he is helping them with the process of identification, so that they are able to take on this value as one of their own. Redl and Wineman describe the process thus:

> A child develops a positive relationship to a person [we would like to add: or a group]. He then surrenders his affectionate claims upon that person in favor of establishing that person's value demands within himself. Instead of wanting to possess and love the parent or teacher, he begins to want to be the kind of person himself that that parent or teacher would like him to be.[4]

The second important aspect of identification with a leader is in relation to the need of the child who feels threatened simply because he is in an interracial situation. This child may need an adult with whom he can identify as part of the same racial or ethnic group. This is true for *both* minority and majority group members. We have seen most striking examples of this in camp situations, where quick identification with a parent symbol is of such great importance to many children. In the case of racial difference, there may be a very practical physical as well as emotional reason for this. For example, in a girls'

[4] Fritz Redl and David Wineman, *Children Who Hate* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951).

camp where there were several Negro campers but no Negro counselors, a group from a neighboring camp came for an afternoon visit, accompanied by a Negro counselor. She was immediately surrounded by Negro children and besieged with requests for help with their hair. The white counselors had been aware of the need to do something and had offered to help if the children would tell them what to do, but they did not know the mechanics. The children had given vague replies about not knowing, or being told by their mothers not to take down their braids while in camp, and had refused all offers of help. One counselor, concerned about the musty odor developing as a result of repeated dunkings in the swimming pool, insisted on unbraiding one child's hair and wound up with a hopelessly fuzzy tangle. Neither she nor any of the other counselors repeated that mistake. But now that a Negro adult was in camp, the jars of pomade and hair oil, the combs and the ribbons, appeared like magic and there was an afternoon of hairdressing. The problem that had at first appeared to be a need for symbolic emotional identification turned out to be a simple physical one of dealing with unruly braids.

But was it all a simple physical problem? Why had the children not brought out their equipment for the white counselors to use? Why had they insisted it was all right to leave the tight braids intact? Perhaps even here we see a manifestation of imperfect identification, of inability to relate to the leader who appears to be different or to represent a symbol of something feared or hated. Staff members who were Negro were hired for later sessions in this camp, and it was interesting to see that even the older Negro girls who knew how to take care of their hair tended to seek out the Negro counselors for advice, or to participate more freely in activities in which Negro counselors had some part.

This matter of identification can also be important for the so-called majority group child. In one camp a dark-skinned Hindu student was cabin counselor to a group with two Negro boys and four white ones. The Negro boys expressed great pleasure at having a "colored" counselor and the white boys remained aloof. The counselor tried to explain to them that although he was dark-skinned he was a Caucasian like them, but this did not help. The cabin was divided into two hostile subgroups, and the counselor could not seem to "get through" to the white boys. On the second day a white junior counselor was assigned to assist the Indian. The white boys quickly identified with the white counselor, who gave them the acceptance and support they needed but at the same time turned to the Indian counselor as the

group leader. With this reassurance, the white boys were able to drop their hostile attitude and begin to relate warmly to both the senior counselor and their Negro cabinmates.

If a child is a member of an only slightly less disadvantaged minority group, this matter of needing an adult symbol of the same group for identification is even more important. For example, in a city with a large lower-class Italian population, there is frequently competition between Negroes and Italians for jobs, housing, recreation facilities, and community acceptance. For this reason a settlement house serving a predominantly Italian neighborhood in such a city has some of the greatest resistances to desegregation. In one such agency, when the interracial policy was finally and firmly put into effect, the white adolescent boys moved out and established a clubhouse in a vacant storeroom. The group worker who had been their leader—white but non-Italian—was unable to persuade them to return. Another staff worker, however, a second-generation Italian who had grown up in the neighborhood, started meeting with them in their storeroom. They were able to identify with him sufficiently to talk out their fears and prejudices and ultimately to take on enough of his value system concerning integration to return to the agency for some program.

Does this mean, then, that the only adult who can be effective as a group leader is one with whom the group can identify because of his race or creed or nationality? Not at all! To say this would be to fall into the trap of those who say, "We cannot change because our members are not ready," or "We cannot hire a Negro (or a Jew, or a Protestant) because our clientele would not accept him." What both group worker and consultant do need to understand is that a child who looks at an adult as a possible love object and as a potential for identification sees him through the eyes of his life experience, including all the prejudices and stereotypes his culture has given him. But in any agency setting a child has contact with more than one adult who is a potential for this kind of relationship, and if he gets involved effectively in the program he can be helped to identify with a variety of adults. It is fortunate that this is so, for this means that a group worker can help a group member find the support of someone from his own reference group when needed. With this support, the member can next learn to identify with someone else who seems to him to be different. In doing this, the leader helps to prepare group members for the kind of broadly democratic participation that is the goal of most group-serving agencies.

With regard to professional leadership, then, the agency must

recognize the importance of having staff people representing a variety of racial, religious, and nationality identifications, and especially those which the members also represent. Staff members need to understand the importance to group members of being like someone who is liked before they can move into other kinds of relationships. They have to understand and use the dynamics of the identification process to broaden the experience of the members.

Program Planning

Dean and Rosen point to some significant items of program-planning when they say, "A favorable orientation toward American creed values will generally reduce resistance to desegregation," and "Groups oriented to special activities, such as arts and crafts, sports, and field trips, generally accept desegregation more readily than club-oriented groups formed for general companionship." [5] There are several other program factors that affect desegregation. For one thing, mere association across race lines does not necessarily mean that prejudice will disappear. It may actually serve to deepen prejudice and increase conflict if the group worker does not consciously plan otherwise. Also, intellectual discussions of race relations or sermons on brotherhood are at best a waste of time and at worst may serve to arouse considerable hostility. By this it is not intended to imply that the worker should never talk with group members about the situation at hand, but rather that he does so when the group has demonstrated some readiness for such discussion. At this time he can help them to identify with the values the agency wishes to have them incorporate.

Another factor to be considered in program-planning is that of attractiveness. Where there is a reluctance to participate by someone in the group who feels strange or different, the program plans must sound so enticing that no one wants to be left out, and the actual activity must be so absorbing that no one wants to drop out after he has started. Having a good time together is one of the best ways for most people to begin to overcome a feeling of strangeness.

A final factor is the nature of the piece of program itself. Three questions should be answered about it:

1. Is it the kind of activity that all members can engage in comfortably at this stage of their development in an unsegregated setting?

2. Does it avoid any possibility of stereotyping?

3. Does it increase intergroup understanding?

[5] Dean and Rosen, *op. cit.*

The answers to the first two questions *must* be affirmative if the activity is to help intergroup relations. It is to be hoped that the last question will also be answered in the affirmative on a substantial number of occasions for any one group. Let us examine each of these more closely.

1. *Can all the members engage in this comfortably now?*

A few years ago, an answer to this question typically included a statement that one does not start a desegregated program with dancing or swimming. While the advisability of such a hard and fast rule seems less certain as we gain experience, the logic behind it still holds. Any activity that involves physical contact, and especially any activity that includes both sexes, is subject to more rigid taboos and consequently likely to have less acceptance than another kind of activity. If the group leader has an understanding of the value systems of the people with whom he works, he will give them an opportunity to get acquainted in a less threatening activity—in a craft project where the work is largely individual, or a game of dodge ball where the action is individual and the only contact is through the ball, or in group singing or club trips. As the leader finds people relaxing and enjoying each other, he can help them to move into beginning contact activities such as circle games, team sports with mixed teams, or square dancing. If swimming is an immediate part of the program— as in camp, for example—he will want to create an atmosphere in which questions can be asked and answered in a nondefensive manner. He should be prepared to help the youngsters discuss their concerns, ventilate their feelings, and handle them constructively.

With regard to a dance, it is to be hoped that other activities have helped to prepare for this significant event. But if they have not, the group worker can do much to ease the situation by helping members discuss and plan in advance how they are going to act in order to insure a good time for everyone.

2. *Does it avoid any possibility of stereotyping?*

Strangely enough, this is the question that gives group workers most trouble with themselves. Or perhaps it is not so strange when we recall that many otherwise good games and some of our most melodious songs have words or phrases that stereotype. At any rate, we find group work and recreation people reluctant to change the words of

"Old Man River" or their favorite Stephen Foster song, and aghast at the idea that anybody could take offense at "Jump Jim Crow!" We even find a few hardy protesters who refuse to give up a song about "Mah Mammy calls me Snowball 'cause I'm so black," on the basis that it is satire and therefore fun, and so ridiculous that no one could possibly be offended. A favorite defense for leaders like this is to ask some minority group person whether he is offended. If he says he is not—and it is my experience that only the most aggressively hostile person will say he is—then the leader thinks this justifies his approach. But John Dewey pointed to the fallacy in this line of thought when he said,

> We are beginning to realize that emotions and imagination are more potent in shaping public sentiment and opinion than information and reason. Indeed, long before the present crisis came into being there was a saying that if one could control the songs of a nation, one need not care who made its laws.[6]

The group worker who uses the derogatory song or game should examine his reasons for clinging to them. The point is that we are trying to help children think about and react to people as individuals without being burdened any more than necessary with the negative stereotypes common to our society. We may not be able to counteract the stereotypes completely, but at least we do not need to add to them. Frequently what the group worker needs is simply some help in enlarging his own repertory of games and music. One music director has said that there is so much beautiful music in the world that we will never learn all of it anyway, and if some songs seem detrimental now, they can be put aside until some time in the future when the stereotypes they represent will be matters of history only and they can be sung without hurt to anyone. In the meantime, we can work on learning some of the less well-known but equally beautiful songs that do not reinforce negative ideas.

3. Does it increase intergroup understanding?

One thing should be kept in mind in answering this question. Not every piece of program that introduces a different cultural pattern or concept broadens intergroup understanding; some divide or stereotype. The converse is also true: the same old program idea used in a slightly different way or as a starting point for group exploration

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[6] John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939).

of a new idea can be full of intercultural learning. What the group worker does with the program—how he introduces it, how he helps in its development, his own attitudes toward it and toward whatever it may represent culturally—are at least as important as the initial program idea itself. W. H. Kilpatrick has said, "If one is to learn anything . . . he must respond with that thing to some actual situation," and "We learn each response to the degree that we live it." [7]

There is much source material for the kinds of program that will help group members learn by living a positive intergroup experience. A camp stunt night, for example, can be planned in connection with festivals of different countries using folk music learned in camp and adding creative dramatics to tell the story of song or festival. A summer playday can be built around a Scandinavian theme of midsummer night. A star hike can include the Japanese legend of Tanabata. Many differences can be introduced—through food, music, games, stories, and dramatics—but the emphasis must be on helping the child have an experience of positive identification with the idea rather than a feeling of "this is fun—or funny—because it is different."

In all this the group worker applies what he knows about age and sex needs and about the individual members, as he plans or helps the group to plan activities. But he adds the extra care and attention that will help the group to have a positive experience with each other in spite of their fears and doubts about someone who seems different. If, in addition, he can stretch their horizons still further and help them really to accept difference, he will indeed have helped the group toward their attainment of a democratic goal.

[7] William H. Kilpatrick, *Basic Principles in Intercultural Education* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947).

Reducing racial
and religious discrimination

JACK WEINER

The world seems to reek of conflict and tension; daily our newspapers, television, and other media of mass information highlight racial or religious "incidents." Theaters, movies, and literature use breakdown in human relationships as basic themes. Our political arena promotes a consciousness of religion in connection with basic social and economic issues. Organizations to reduce tension and discrimination abound; budgetary allocations for "defense" agencies run well into the millions. These facts are self-evident to all who are alert to their surroundings, regardless of the extent of their knowledge in areas of human relations.

The international implications stemming from the upsurge toward independence and nationalism among the nonwhite peoples of the world reach into the council chambers of every international and national policy-making body. The ramifications for our own government as reflected in the relationships of ethnic and racial groups will inevitably touch the lives of each individual. The methods used to deal with the inevitable tensions that must arise when diverse elements of our population move to achieve the political, social, and economic status they demand and deserve will be determined not so much by government action or legal decree as by the day-to-day relationships of individuals. These relationships have their inception in people's emotional and attitudinal tones. It is conceivable that the sensitiveness

of this issue arouses more emotion than most of the socioeconomic or moral issues that will face us in the next decade. Government action unaccompanied by emotional maturity may well prolong the tension for the majority while expediting the achievement of human rights for the minority. This is to say that handling tension between groups and individuals is more related to feelings and attitudes than to mere enabling legislation for civil rights, and that radical social change without fundamental emotional growth in people—which takes time—will not in reality resolve discrimination and tension. Even as emotional maturity does not negate the need for legislative action, it is apparent that each must accompany the other for either to be effective. While our legal machinery is precariously grinding out the basis upon which rights are granted to peoples, it becomes increasingly evident that our ability effectively to implement legal action flows from our skill in helping people achieve good attitudinal and emotional levels of living and working with racially and religiously diverse populations. As social workers whose daily tasks revolve around human emotions, our role in this gigantic enterprise cannot be underestimated.

In a status-conscious, materialistic society the individual is measured more by what he has than by what he is; logically, what he becomes will be the result of what he seeks, to the degree that his environment permits him to use social, political, and economic forces to improve his place in society. What, then, are we seeking? Dr. Marvin Harris, anthropologist of Columbia University, has put it this way: "Much that we do depends on how we answer the question, 'What do we want the ultimate fate of our minorities here in the U.S. to be?' " Answering this question poses some kind of dilemma for those concerned with "adjustment," "harmony," "unity," and other attributes supposedly contributing to the happiness or peace of mind of the individual. There are some who believe that where there is no societal heterogeneity in which apparent differences operate, there will follow a reduction or alleviation of tension. May it not be to our advantage, then, to strive for the elimination of the pluralism within our society and move toward an assimilated community in which cultural differences are consciously sublimated? Many would and do suggest this; yet our social agencies and our profession could not, with principles of self-determination and the uniqueness of the individual, accept an approach that completely annihilates difference. Nor are we convinced that uniformity necessarily begets unity. Finally—and definitively— the elimination of racial diversity is utterly impossible.

While the assimilationist approach may in terms of short-range goals

appear the more practical and possibly the simpler solution to religious tension, the denial of pluralism and its guiding principle—retaining group integrity and group difference—would in the long run be neither truly productive, desirable, or even realistically achievable.   The very essence of our democratic society would be sorely tried.   We might reduce tension, but would inevitably destroy human creativity and in its stead provide a mechanistic, conforming milieu in which the human spirit must subsequently lose its quality.   Those who have considered the assimilationist approach must already have recognized its worthlessness.   Writers and thinkers no longer speak of America as the "melting pot" or crucible in which cultural diversity is blended into something uniquely panculturistic.   As one writer has suggested, we seek in our quest for racial and religious harmony not an elimination of difference, but within our diversities "a reduction in tension, a lowering of barriers of discrimination, an end to segregation, a lessening of prejudice and the elimination of violence, conflict and intimidation." [1]   To achieve these, without the disappearance of the various minority elements in our culture as identifiable cultural and social entities, is indeed a more nobly democratic goal.

This then becomes the great challenge to the social group worker whose skills are directed to the interaction process of individuals within groups, and between groups.   The interrelatedness of social worker, clientele, agency, and community is the cement that binds together the structure we are building to reduce tension and discrimination.   Accepting, as we do, the premise that by adding the ingredient of a trained worker the constellation of a group is rearranged, the professional worker must be seen as a key factor in effecting change, particularly in attitudes and feelings.

Despite professional training and intensive analysis of self as related to attitudes, it is conceivable that workers may have difficulty in using the professional self when the personal self is so highly interwoven in this sensitive area.   While we may hope for the contrary, it would be less than honest to suppose that professional training alone can completely eradicate preconceived, long-evolved attitudes that stem from family and communal settings affecting the trained worker.   It is one thing to accept the credos of social work on an intellectual level;

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[1] Dr. Simon Slavin, "Resolving Problems Based on Racial, Socio-Economic and Religious Differences through Group Serving Agencies." Unpublished paper delivered at New York School of Social Work Institute, January 1960. The writer has relied heavily on this paper as a resource.

it is more difficult to expect objective practice to follow when deeply ingrained emotional elements still operate. As the social worker himself moves upward in the economic ladder, accompanied by middle-class social standards and practices, his personal outlook may—indeed, almost inevitably *will*—begin to battle with his professional conviction. While professionally we may be able to deal with client feelings and attitudes in achieving objectives involving intergroup relationships, actual involvement of self in such relationships on a personal level may disclose elements not so easily handled.

Obviously, the effectiveness of the worker in this area must be enhanced or deterred by what he brings to the job in attitudes along with his skills. It would be unfair to direct this statement at workers in a given geographical section of the country alone, since it is obvious that social and economic discriminatory attitudes, overt or hidden, exist in every section of the country. Indeed, when legal factors have made it harder for discriminatory practices to flourish, discriminatory attitudes are more easily concealed. While outwardly the worker is provided with a setting in which he can exploit positive values in programs geared to racial and religious harmony, his own inner emotional components may remain unchanged and unnoticed because in his professional practice he is legally forced to repress them. Nevertheless, his unexpressed inner personal feelings may continue to remain contradictory to his expressed professional goals. When these dynamics are consciously explored, there is possibility for movement; when such elements are unconscious or repressed, however, they operate subconsciously and inadvertently affect the worker's function.

Differentials in personal and professional self in other arenas of function for the social worker are rather clearly defined and readily understood. In dealing with racial or religious minority relationships, we are perhaps not so ready to understand the divergence which, though we do not desire it, may in reality exist. Let us not be fooled; professional training must not be seen as the sole force in eliminating the personal attitudes or prejudices of a worker; it must be recognized and—desirable or not—accepted that the worker comes into a setting with preconceived values. The sooner we face this honestly, the better we can deal with it. The role of the worker in handling himself in this dimension is not easily nor yet clearly determined; it has gone too long undealt with. At this point one can only say that a worker is what he is, and his performance will be confined within his limits and strengths. To insist that he be free of all prejudice in order to

deal effectively with intergroup attitudes would, one can say, eliminate many trained workers from this area of operation.

So the question inevitably faces us: How can we operate effectively in this area if we have some such limitations? The answer is not easy, or even acceptable. Apparently we must first have an awareness of where we stand and in all candor and full honesty accept ourselves as we are, where we are. The worker who has a basic personal conviction which is in disharmony with that of his profession cannot eliminate it by simply intellectualizing the field's convictions. Indeed, he harms his clients and himself if he espouses the one while feeling and subconsciously practicing the other.

It may take some courage for him to admit that he cannot function in an assignment so fraught with sensitivity. However, we have learned before to discipline our functional selves to areas in which we are comfortable and can function freely. For example, when we have a youthful worker who for one reason or another feels uncomfortable in working with senior citizens, we have no hesitation in removing him from such assignments. Similarly, it would seem, the worker who is or becomes aware of disharmonious convictions as to the validity of our cultural pluralism needs to remove himself, or be removed, from assignments in which his convictions are tied to basic objectives. This is not meant to level criticism at workers who have prejudices; we are far from the ultimate development of man as a social animal in which attitudes based on emotion and misrepresentation will be completely obliterated. The only criticism here is of the reliance on extreme professionalism that denies or closes its eyes to personal attitude. Assuredly training and, it is to be hoped, practice may to some extent modify feelings, but to expect complete acceptance of professional conviction after only two or three years in graduate school, following years and years of exposure to family and community prejudgments, is misguided. The role of the worker in such instances is to relate himself to his assignment as he would analytically relate a client to the group, and determine his own readiness for functioning in it.

How a worker can relieve the dichotomy of personal attitude versus professional objectives and practice is not easily defined. Continual exposure to professional objectives, qualified supporting supervision, and experiential practice may help him move toward a breakdown of any dichotomy. Candid analysis of self, supported by constant evaluation of objectives and practice, possibly may supply some answer. At this point it is difficult to suggest devices or techniques that can

definitely resolve this dilemma; one can only plead for honest awareness of it and not giving in to the tendency of trying to deal with it by avoidance or by rationalizing its validity.

Role of Worker in Relation to Clientele

For the worker who is prepared intellectually *and emotionally* to deal with tension factors resulting from diversity in racial and religious cultures, the role becomes somewhat more clearly defined. The elements he must necessarily cope with, following an honest awareness of self, include his clientele, his agency, and his community.

This paper will be limited in scope, focusing on a homogeneous clientele. The writer spent eight years working in southern communities with groups of Jewish adolescents. His own background was lower-middle-class, traditionally Jewish, in a midwestern community. In the particular setting under discussion, it is important to recognize that the worker himself may come from a setting more or less similar to that of clientele in terms of socioeconomic and attitudinal levels. He may see himself and/or may be seen by his constituents as an extension or integral part of the milieu in which he functions. The client may have difficulty in differentiating the worker's philosophy and attitudes from his own—he may simply expect the worker's attitude to be similar; he may see it as completely contrary; or he may feel unsure of where the worker stands.

When it comes to defining the worker's position, there are degrees of difference within the constituency itself. Each member will correlate the worker's attitude to his own, to the degree that it is substantiating or negating, thus creating diverse interactional directions between worker and individual clients. In using his skills and basing his approach on the objectives for the group, and on his own attitudes as they affect his approach, the worker needs to define clearly for the clientele where he stands. Either he is closely allied to the position of his clientele or he is in conflict with it. Knowing the worker's position is highly important for the constituents and is an essential dynamic in the group's movement toward its objectives.

In a setting of substantial homogeneity, whatever its basis, there are background differentials that affect (manifestly or in hidden fashion) the homogeneity of the group itself. In essence, the true clientele does not consist merely of the identified members of the group but also of parents, siblings, and contemporaries. Recognizing this as basic, the

worker must realize that the effort to reduce hostile attitudes is not directed toward the membership alone; he must recognize and deal with environmental and family hostilities as well. If he seeks as an objective the reduction of hostile attitudes toward racial and religious minorities, he must see as his operational milieu not only the primary group in which he functions, but a complete constellation of member, family, and community, and the interrelationship of these forces.

At this worker's initial introduction to southern constituents there was an immediate expectation regarding his attitudes toward racial minorities, which he recognized. Without attempting to impose his own attitudes, he was nevertheless compelled to make clear his own position, which was to a large degree commensurate with the expectations of the southern constituency—they felt he was comparatively lacking in segregationist attitudes and prepared to break down the "southern way of life." Obviously, to the extent that his position differed from that of his constituency an element of suspicion was introduced. In his first exposure to the constituency, he clearly defined his own stand but also made clear that he understood and respected theirs, immoral, unjust, and contrary though it might seem to his own philosophy.

Accepting the stand of his constituency does not mean abdicating the worker's own position; on the other hand, it also does not mean that he can immediately set out to eradicate and destroy that of his clientele, which is produced by a variety of factors operating in depth. Nor can he embark on an evangelistic campaign to readjust or redirect thinking and action, just and moral though the goals may appear.

Although building and maintaining relationships and rapport with clientele involve techniques well known to professional workers, in the area of attitude development the usual techniques may not always be applicable. In most instances, the writer's southern constituency had had no direct contact on a social level with members of racial minority groups. To be sure, in the economic sphere they had dealt with them; in many instances they were cared for by Negro or Mexican maids. However, they had no social relations with minority groups and were dissuaded by family and community pressures from initiating them. Exploiting the natural curiosities and adventure-seeking drives of adolescents, the worker introduced the possibility of relating temporarily, in an educational conference setting, to minority young people. The group, intrigued by this "new experience," was ready to explore a short-term contact; arrangements were completed for a small number of Negro adolescents to participate with them in a week-long conference

setting. Without going into detail it is fair to say that exposure to each other resulted in apparently better understanding and apparent acceptance. The usual ending of a harmonious relationship and growth in understanding seemed to prevail, as has been reported in numerous instances where intergroup programs have been held.

However, the real test came *after* the experience. To what extent were the participants ready to continue social relationships with minority groups following the conference? To what degree was the relationship extended to minority group members beyond the conference contemporaries who were mutually acceptable? To what degree could the constituents withstand parental and communal pressures to break off any ongoing relationship? In essence, what lasting effects resulted from a short-term experience geared toward harmonizing diversity?

The answer for the most part seemed to be that, while the actual experience itself was "successful" in terms of temporarily reducing tensions, the carry-over values dissolved when the setting changed. Moreover, it was clearly manifest that the members who were most ready to participate in such a project were already involved to some extent in similar projects, and that the degree of participation was disproportionate to the need for it. This is not unlike the situation of the preacher who harangues his congregation on the subject of attending services, when the very people before him are not those to whom his remarks should be addressed.

Clearly a short-term, one-shot experience is merely a beginning. The group worker is required, it would seem, to utilize the usual program tools, but programing through formally planned and organized activities alone may not be sufficient. We are too prone to attract people of a particular readiness who require such experiences least. Rather it behooves the worker to concentrate on those who are most expressive, in overt or hidden ways, of hostility. While there is no intention of derogating the usual formalized interfaith and interracial programs that serve as dramatic manifestations of movement toward reduction of tension, it is clear that we must create new dynamic approaches that touch the individual long after such experiences, as well as reaching those who do not permit themselves to be exposed to such programing.

It was highly apparent that when there was contact between minority groups around problems affecting them mutually, with a social action goal, the relationships and understandings were deepened. Rather than meeting and discussing "brotherhood" or "interfaith," action toward problem-solving was the basis for the contact. Working

together toward the solution of a common problem appeared to be a more effective tool, with the worker highly conscious of his role in helping individuals modify their attitudes through the process. The lack of readiness for some individuals to obtain value from group or mass interaction may point to some leads in programing for the objectives we seek. Involving individuals in research and survey of conditions relating to minority groups, through which facts and impressions are gained by the use of the individual's own senses and study, tends to form a basis from which a member can develop modified reactions. Providing a setting in which constituents are motivated toward one-to-one relationships beyond economic contacts may serve as an introductory step toward group relationships. For example, this writer brought together the presidents of a Negro and a white adolescent group for the purpose of exploring with them attitudes of adolescent youth around morality in connection with a study the worker was making. The young people were made clearly aware of the direct purpose of their being together; it was understood that this meeting was not a ruse or gimmick to lead into intergroup relationships. However, as a result of exploring the basic questions together, the indigenous youth leadership themselves agreed that further contact between more of their numbers could better provide the answers. From this grew a project of joint study and exploration extending over the period of a year, out of which emerged lasting relationships for a few and better understanding of each other's attitudes for many.

Dealing with individuals deeply steeped in hostility requires a differentiated approach. Here again the worker first makes his position unmistakably evident. Moving slowly and with compassion for the factors that have given rise to the hostility, he works with the constituent through informal bull sessions, individual give-and-take discussion, toward acceptance of his position by the client of opposite feeling and views. At no point does he express his own displeasure; at no point does he "sermonize" or demand acceptance; never does he become the evangelist crying out for justice. Appealing to the morality of his clients, to the justice inherent in true democracy, to the basic rightness of his position, may tend to deepen the negative convictions of his clientele. While the more laborious and slender approach may seem distasteful and lack the glamor of a vigilante campaign, it appears to have some measure of more lasting effectiveness. Surely the day when all prejudice and discrimination will disappear is millennia away from us in the future. We ought not to attempt

universal conversion, but gear our efforts to individualized settings and particular clienteles.

Role of the Worker in Relation to Agency and Community

There can be no quarrel with the premise that the development of a communal attitude takes place in a two-way medium involving individual impact on the group and group impact on the individual. Individual thinking and feeling are reflected in the community, while at the same time communal attitudes are mirrored in individual thought. No social worker works with an inorganic static entity called "community"; he works with people who together make up a dynamic social organism. Each individual, each community, is the latest reflection of a long-term development with layers of thought and approach overlaid on earlier layers. Radical alterations are slow in movement; slight mediations and modifications, almost unnoticed, become integrated into the constellation of communal viewpoints.

The role of social work has historically been directed toward changing generic situations while dealing with specific problems. Because we may be inclined to concentrate on the specific, in recent years the profession has been judged guilty of not striving for general social change to eliminate or alleviate the conditions that give rise to specific evils.

The reduction of racial and religious tension cannot be unrelated to the forces that create it. We cannot deal with discriminatory attitudes without dealing with historically dominant economic and social forces that create and maintain them. Thus, it seems, our approach to the community demands more than a unilateral concentration on discriminatory practices. We cannot help a community reduce tension merely by dealing with the discriminatory act; we need to delve deeper and search out these forces that create the act. The economic climate must be ripe; the social setting must have elements that can bring fulfillment; the emotional tone needs to be controllable. Without these factors, solutions are superficial and not lasting.

Here, it seems, the community must be helped to understand itself before it can be motivated toward the goal we espouse. The power structure of a community, with the institutions that develop its constituents, must be helped to see itself in all its strengths and limitations. In our zeal to exploit power structures toward our established goals, we are too prone to follow the pressures of power people for the fear

of alienating them or losing their support. Certainly this is a hazard we face—people hate to face reality when it is ugly. However, before we move toward improvement, we must know in candor and honesty where we are. Thus the boards of agencies, community planning leaders, civic leaders, and the like need the enablement of professionals to understand themselves, much as we would help group members know themselves.

Too often, in our zeal to cultivate and exploit board and communal leaders, we avoid sharing truths with them, if such truths are unpleasant or require effort and time in problem-solving. It is much more comfortable to delay or to ignore issues which may alienate those we want to cultivate. We must, again without evangelistic furor or imposition, help our lay leadership to face these issues and find the necessary solutions. At the same time, as professional workers we must not overanticipate the reactions of our laity, so that when solutions are not to our liking we immediately retreat or remove ourselves from the setting. True, it is disagreeable or uncomfortable to find ourselves included in decisions that are contrary to basic conviction; nevertheless, taking a stand that demands our self-removal if our own position is not accepted will in no way contribute to the growth of the people who make the decision. The social work profession should thrive on adversity, for if there were none, there would be little need for the profession.

Rather than retreat from conditions or ways of dealing with problems contrary to our beliefs, we ought to continue to work toward their elimination. If we retreat, we give strength to the adversary, for his opposition is removed. Thus patience, faith, and understanding should accompany conviction, commitment, and standards. Workers who remove themselves from a particular section of the country, or who refuse jobs in those areas because conditions are not in harmony with their convictions, are doing the profession and themselves a disservice. Certainly, if family or other reasons dictate the need for a worker to leave a particular area, there is no quarrel with his decision. However, to remove oneself because discrimination or tension is exhibited is to betray the cause for which social work exists.

Specifically, if we are to help the community in an attempt to reduce tension, we need to create a candid awareness of the community's situation as it regards its tensions, in reality and in potential. This means that we cannot be quiescent and remain inactive simply because we have no "incident" around which to act. As the forces that create tension—neighborhood changes, economic upheavals, and other fac-

tors well known to us—begin to develop, social workers must take the lead in isolating and identifying them for the community. We must bring our skills and knowledge to bear on these conditions and their impact on the tension-vulnerable setting. Lastly, we as social workers must take the lead in establishing machinery through which these tensions can be articulated in constructive fashion.

The machinery we help to create must not be the type that includes only elements at which discrimination is directed. The "Negro problem," the "Jewish problem," the "Catholic problem"—as has already been pointed out by others—do not involve solely the minority group; they have implications for all people, since invariably the effect on a particular minority transmits itself to other minorities and eventually to the entire community. Therefore, the planning of attacks on discrimination, the exploration or study of particular issues, the social action drives for improvement of human conditions require the participation of all elements of the community. More often than not, our zealousness for leadership or desire for recognition results in unilateral approaches that find our own constituency participating alone while we get all the credit for "solving" a problem. We ought to seek less our own credit and more the involvement of all in need of interpretation; thus it would seem that the agency, in dealing with discrimination and tension, should seek the assistance and collaboration of others rather than limiting participation and leadership to its own leaders for the sake of credit.

Mankind has too long tended to repress the forces that give him concern; inevitably, they rise to haunt him. It is time for our profession, our agencies, and our communities to face the elements of racial and religious discrimination, for during the next decades human survival will be determined, more than ever before, by the way man feels and acts toward his fellow man. Nations that persist in preparing for defense from without, and neglect the corroding forces within represented by racial and religious disharmony, may survive physically but die in terms of human productivity and spirit. The social group worker can contribute to creative survival by enabling himself and his constituency to move toward the reduction of racial and religious tensions.

Group services—
well-being for older people

JEAN M. MAXWELL

A causative relationship between loneliness, social rejection, and illness may be hard to prove, but the importance of loneliness as an element in the unhappiness and maladjustments of many older people is generally recognized.

> That a corollary situation exists in relation between mental health and the feeling of social relatedness as evidenced by possession of adequate social contacts is . . . widely recognized.
> It is this recognition as well as the desire to provide activity which prompted the establishment of centers and clubs for older people.[1]

In the United States today there are sixteen million persons 65 years and over. They range in age from 65 years to 112 years. There are more women than men, and of these the larger number are widows. A few of these persons work full time, some part time, but the greatest number are retired from paid employment. Some 5 percent live in institutions such as homes for the aged, nursing homes, and hospitals. The other 95 percent live in their own homes or trailers, in the homes of relatives or friends, and in apartment houses or rooms. They live with their spouses, with relatives or friends, or as boarders, or alone.

[1] Geneva Mathiasen, "The Retirement Environment and Its Relation to Health and Disease," in *Criteria for Retirement,* edited by the author (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1952), p. 113.

More than 50 percent of people of 65 years and over live on less than $1,000 a year. A few are millionaires, while some have not a penny to call their own. Some are comfortably off and some barely get by. Most of these sixteen million have at least an eighth-grade education, but there are those who have never learned to read or write. On the other hand, the most highly educated citizens in the United States fall into this age group, and every nationality or ethnic group and every religion is represented in it.

Many are physically able, keen of mind, and active because of high interest in the world around them. There are those who are ill or debilitated, who cannot get around, are confused mentally, or defeated. It is clear that the circumstances of life for older people vary as they do with other age groups. Not every person 65 years of age and older will find purpose in living in the same way. Not every person will need or want the same degree or kind of community opportunities for avenues for successful living.

In coming to grips with these problems, each local community will need to make a factual study of the unique characteristics of its own older population. Since group services are only one piece in the mosaic of services for older people, albeit a major one, they must be planned in relation to the total services for older people. These total services encompass the broad range of income maintenance, housing and living arrangements; health, medical, and hospital care; nursing and home help services, family or personal counseling, and legal or guardianship services, as well as social, educational, and recreational opportunities. In youth services we have learned that no single program can meet the total needs of youth in any one town, no matter how excellent; even with the wide range of organizations familiar to us (Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Y's, settlements, religious organizations, and so forth), in the city of Chicago only some 17 percent of the youth population is served through community-based services; while community-based services to older people at present help a very small proportion of the total older population (3–5 percent).

We have little knowledge of the way time is used by older people as a whole. Some current and projected studies are exploring this area. It is estimated that at least half the older people in a population will have personal resources to meet their own social relationship and activity needs. It is with the estimated 50 percent who will need community-based group services for social, educational, and recreational opportunities that this paper is concerned.

The life requirements of older people are the same as for any other

age group, but far more difficult to satisfy. Money, research, creative ideas, and devotion have been poured into keeping more people alive longer. Equal time, money, and attention have not been given to answering this question, "Alive for what?" Existence without meaningful purpose has long been recognized in man's history as empty; man does not live by bread alone. Lewis Mumford reminds us that "the first step toward framing a sound program is to examine the human situation as a whole, not to center attention solely upon the problems of destitution, chronic diseases, and hospital care." [2]

Group services for older people have heard this warning in part, and have not focused on the problems of destitution, chronic disease, and hospital care, but they have often been lax in examining the human situation of older people. An institutionalized program approach has come to be designated as the "tea and ceramics" approach. Negative attitudes and stereotypes about aging and the aged have bloomed in a cultural soil which has nurtured values damaging to this group. Older people often react with confusion and quiet desperation to the high premium given to youthful qualities and attractiveness, when bodily changes inevitably accompany the passage of years. To be young is desirable in our society, and as yet no fountain of youth has been discovered to slow up or reverse the process of growing old. Feelings of unattractiveness and loss of self-worth in the older person often result.

Physical and sexual prowess are related in people's minds to youth, and actual or imagined loss in one or both of these areas brings self-doubt. In our society an agile mind and a facile memory are often mistaken for intellectual endowment and creativity. Slowness of learning and the appearance of memory loss, no matter how slight, older people are apt to interpret as loss of intellectual endowment and inability to create or learn. We are a future-oriented society, measuring status and usefulness by productivity, weight of responsibility, and earning power. Status and the sense of self-worth deflate markedly when there is no longer a job in a company or organization to indicate the degree of productivity and the measure of responsibility, and when there is no longer a pay check coming regularly into the home as a measure of one's value to the world.

Many people have had to work all their lives, without time to develop avocational interests. Others have viewed any recreational

[2] Lewis Mumford, "For Older People—Not Segregation but Integration," *Architectural Record,* issue No. 234, a special study of "Building for the Aging" (May 1956), p. 191.

pastimes as either child's play or sinful. "The devil finds work for idle hands" expresses an attitude which has prevented people from appreciating the value of leisure time. For some, the transition to retirement is especially hard because of these negative attitudes about any avocational pursuits.

The period of change from being valued for what one did—from *what one is* to *who one is*—can be a stormy passage through heavy tides of self-doubt. There are those who founder. Most people who survive do so because they have built throughout their lives a core of self-respect which serves as a sturdy bark for this period of travel. Few escape without some feelings of loneliness and need for companionship and belonging, of uselessness and the need for being useful through a meaningful pursuit; there is often lack of self-confidence in being able to develop new relationships, interests, and skills; often timidity and withdrawal—need for new resources to provide recognition and respect, status and affection.

Not only are greater numbers of people living longer, but life-expectancy itself is increasing. Dr. Bell Boone Beard of Virginia has discovered that there are more than three thousand persons in the United States today over 100 years old. We are told it will become more commonplace to live to 100 years, and that we can anticipate more persons living to 125 years in the future. This causes us to view the old stereotypes about aging in a new dimension. The urgency of acquainting everyone in our society with the new concepts and possibilities of older people as healthy, vital, and able individuals must be recognized by each person working with them. This knowledge must be a part of the understanding and belief of each human being as he approaches the later years.

Extended life brings with it the necessity of planning for use of the additional time in one's life as carefully as we now feel the need to develop sound financial resources. Sheer use of time can become a major problem through the monotony of days and sameness of routine.

The middle-aged dream of retirement often fades when overabundance of time becomes a reality. Whether the separation from one's lifework happens gradually or abruptly, there comes a moment when the older person faces twenty-four hours a day free of the habitual daily tasks. When the weight of responsibility presses down, twenty-four hours of freedom look very desirable. It may truly prove so for a time. However for most people a point of realization comes when these twenty-four hours a day face one for 365 days a year in relentless fashion, year upon year until death. One woman said, "We aging are

like a group of people gathered at a railroad station waiting for the train to pull out. But in some cases the train doesn't pull out for 25 years."

What can be done with this newly acquired time? For every other age group from babyhood to middle age society sets expectations and requirements that demand a core of time from the individual's day. The small baby's job is eating and sleeping, since society wants him to develop normally and healthfully. But even he has a period designated as "playtime." For older children and adults the societal tasks may be school, work to produce, raising children, or keeping house. For the retired person, society at this time has no such task defined, and the individual is thrown back on his own inner resources and self-expectations to determine what he shall do with himself in this newly acquired eight to ten hours a day available to him.

The use of time is commonly evaluated in relation to a job or task. The question is asked of a potential employee or student applying at a school, "Does he use his time well?" By this we are setting up values expressed in such phrases as "uses time efficiently," "wastes time." But this set of values relates to a goal, to getting a job done.

For the older person who has retired, whose children are grown, we have no such goal. In fact, society has only recently become aware that this can be a perplexing problem for an individual, so caught up have we been in the idyll of retirement as "having nothing to do." The older person has been left completely to his own initiative to decide whether each day, newly freed of work, is to be "killed" or "filled," "used" or "enjoyed."

The use of time has four dimensions: With whom is it spent? Where is it spent? What is done during this span of time? What is the objective?

So far as human personalities are concerned, there are only three possible states of association: being alone, being with one other person, or being in a group (three or more). It is generally assumed that a balanced life will include all three in some admixture, which will result from personal selection and the limitations of opportunity. No formula of "normality" has been developed beyond labeling a person as eccentric if he chooses to be a "hermit," avoiding association with other human beings; or the shaking of heads over those who rush madly from one thing to another to avoid being in their own company.

One of the major impacts of retirement and/or aging is the potential increase of time spent by oneself. Being alone can be enjoyable, fruitful, and revitalizing when it is a voluntary choice made by the

individual, when aloneness is rooted in the security of being loved
and wanted, and when the individual is equipped with individual
pursuits that interest or challenge him. Spending time by oneself
can be a devastating, personally destroying experience when it is
imposed—when there is no other choice. Loneliness can cripple or
destroy.

Pursuits serve as a link to others, to the recipients of products made,
to those who share community of interest; a channel to and from the
world even though the activity or interest is pursued separately. Group
services must seek to develop or strengthen inner personal resources,
meaningful relationships, challenging pursuits, balance of life experi-
ences for each older person, so that the hours he spends alone are
anticipated as fruitful rather than feared as an interminable time of
destructive loneliness.

Relationships are lived between two people, or in pairs. It is gen-
erally recognized that a common fate or enterprise, an agreement or
secret between two persons, ties both in a manner very different from
what happens when even three have a part in it.[3] The major pair
association of our society, marriage, has been known to the large
majority of older people. Even when the marriage has not been
completely happy, loss of the relationship form of common ties between
these two people leaves a great hole in a person's life. When love,
affection, and companionship have been interwoven, the loss is even
more severe. The cutting off of sexual expression as well as physical
affection is another dimension. Moreover, certain group patterns are
available only to married couples. Other members of the customary
couple dances, weekends, parties, and card games often try to include
the remaining widow or widower, but it is not long before the bereaved
person drops out because the situation needs a pair. The role of
husband and wife, of a married couple as a unit, provides very dif-
ferent social opportunities and responsibilities from that of a widow
or widower or single person in our society. Thus, at the same time
as the older person faces personal loss in marriage, he or she is
required to make major adjustments to these new roles and social
circles.

Group services for older people must be sensitive to the meaning of
these losses and changes, recognizing that a major contribution can
be made in the provision of social opportunities for widows, widowers,
and single people to meet persons of the opposite sex; to date, dance,

[3] Robert F. Bales, Edgar F. Borgatta, and Paul Hare, *Small Groups: Studies in
Social Interaction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 13.

and discuss within the male-female relationship. To promote some balance between the sexes is difficult, since women outnumber men in large proportion.

Since group services help to change attitudes and expectations in other areas, it is important for staff, board, and sponsoring body to give careful thought in this area of attitudes about sex. One assumption rarely discussed but certainly held by a large number of people is that sexual needs vanish in older people. Sexual needs and expression, especially on the part of men, are often condemned as "dirty." Inconsistently enough, the seeking of a companion of the opposite sex by persons of older years is often referred to as "cute" or "funny."

> Frustrations often present greater problems than conventional gratifications of instinctive urges. When a sexual misadventure befalls an older person, the threat he anticipates of failure, ostracism or social retaliation is likely to precipitate in him the fear, guilt, apprehension and remorse to which he has long been conditioned.[4]

Duke University Research Center for Aging has indicated that sexual activity patterns extend into older age in much the same form as they have been lived at earlier stages. It is now believed that if people have enjoyed an active sexual life, they will go on doing so in later years.

Group services can help reduce potential or actual damage to individuals or pairs resulting from the social taboos involved here by recognizing and viewing as normal and desirable the interest in the opposite sex. Older people themselves may need help to see that sexual hungers are not "freakish" but normal. In group services where there is recognition and acceptance of continuing male-female interests, marriages frequently result. Some group services have sought highly skilled experienced part-time staff to give marriage or remarriage counseling to individuals or couples, to help them understand and accept this instinctive urge.

Another pair relationship deeply imbedded in the pattern of life is close friendship. Friendships within one's own generation often develop because of sharing a common fate. Each succeeding generation discovers for itself by experience the life changes, responsibilities, and advantages of living in a specific age cycle, and this provides a bond of understanding. Childhood and adolescence can be under-

4 Edward B. Allen, "Understanding Our Older Persons," in *Growing with the Years* (Newburgh, N. Y.: New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging, 1954), p. 46.

stood by every adult to some degree, since everyone has been a child or teen-ager. Peer group association is especially important among the old because children, adolescents, and young and middle-aged adults alike have no life experience on which to base their understanding of older age; it can only be understood by imaginative, sensitive empathy. Here the peer association need comes at a time when loss of close friends and family members of the same generation is more and more common. Statistically, one out of every twelve persons lives beyond the age of 65 years. Few people in life have close friends that total more than twelve. The wheel of chance determines one's fate in outliving one's closest friends, with friendships dwindling to a smaller and smaller circle. Opportunities must be provided for older people to renew old acquaintance and make new friends among their peers.

Crestwood Heights, a study of a Canadian city, advances proof for an increasing belief that in modern life most friendships developed by individuals and families grow out of one's work group or the work group of the wage-earner.[5] Retirement of the worker may change, cut off, or reduce the scope of friendship built on the common bond of a profession, a company, or a union. The work setting provides a normal means through which contacts can develop across wide age differences, since most work settings demand the services of people from late adolescence through at least 65 years. New opportunities must be found to fill the gaps made by loss of work relationships, and common interests and enterprises discovered that will make possible friendships between people in different age brackets.

One means of assuring friendships and sharing between generations used to be the three-generational family. This is no longer assured for every person. The move to city apartments and suburban smaller houses reduces or eliminates the room for grandparents and older aunts, uncles, or cousins in the household. There are fewer tasks for the older person to perform for the family welfare to "earn his keep," when he does live with the family; the former household garden or farm chores shared between members of different generations do not exist in the same way, providing common occupations from which friendship and understanding grew to bridge the age differences.

Families no longer live out their years in one town. Mobility and transience are characteristic of today's life. Older people and their families must decide between the older people remaining in the home

[5] John Ronald Seeley and Others, *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1956), p. 505.

town without the family or moving with the family to new towns—unfamiliar, and without established friendships.

A third form of human association is in groups. The most basic group to which everyone belongs is the family. For some older people this is the major focus of their lives. Present research shows that when family relationships have been healthy and satisfying over the years, this same pattern of love and attention continues in relation to the older relatives. In some cases family group participation is lessened because of geographical distance. In others tension, discord, or lack of understanding leads to neglect or unhappiness of the older person even in proximity. In some cases the older person has outlived the other family members.

Group experience beyond the family usually includes work-related groups, next in importance and frequency. The extent of participation in such groups usually lessens or is cut off with retirement. Some unions, businesses, and work-related organizations have realized the importance and value of continuing the older person's relation to the focus of his work life and have set up group services; a few examples are the United Auto Workers Centers, the Esso Annuitant Club, and the Retired Civil Service Employees. Church groups, service clubs, fraternal orders, nationality or cultural associations, and other community groups vary markedly in the degree to which they permit or encourage older people to join or remain active, with some making special effort to see that the skills of older people are used in the general activities of the organization or that special groups are set up for their special needs. Others terminate or discourage older people's inclusion, seeing them as useless and a burden after retirement.

Some groups form because friends wish to come together to enjoy and deepen their friendships through common experiences. They are self-initiated. Their membership is limited to those who are already friends. They may be as informal as "going out with the boys," or the ladies on the street gathering for tea; or more formally organized, with a name, regular meeting time and place, and planned activity.

Some groups, both formal and informal, exist to provide an opportunity to learn something or bring people together to share their common interests and knowledge. Others assemble to achieve a specific goal—get something done. This may range from raising money or getting a law passed to educating the general public on the need for a particular program. Some associations are formed around a particular age group. This has long been a familiar pattern in the United

States for children and adolescents. More recently, many service groups for older people have come into being on the assumption that in the older years there are common experiences shared and best understood by all persons in this age group.

It is clear, then, that groups exist for many different purposes. They come into being through self-initiation or through stimulation and promotion by a sponsoring group, agency, or social institution. They range from casual informality to highly structured formal organizations. They range in size from three persons to hundreds. They may be extremely selective in membership or open and available to anyone interested; may meet once a year, or on call, or every day; may include a wide age range or be restricted to only one age level.

All people need to be members of some groups, but Dr. Leo Simmons has expressed the conviction that one of the five basic interests of aging persons is "to remain active participants in group affairs in either operational or supervisory roles, any participation being preferable to idleness and indifference." [6]

This special dimension of need for group participation in older people grows out of the intensification of specific needs as one gets older and the unique opportunities that groups provide in meeting these needs.

1. Changed physical and psychological capacities require understanding and acceptance of these changes, necessitating substitutions and reorganizations of behavior. Peers who have lived or are living through such changes give a support and understanding most helpful to individuals.

2. Groups offer the opportunity to renew old friendships and develop new ones to replace the losses from death of old friends.

3. Community groups and organization memberships increase in importance as a means of providing identity for older people. A person's identity is closely tied to his group affiliations. The question "Who is he?" is directed to family, occupation or profession, company or organization worked for, organization represented. With the growth of larger urban and suburban areas and more and more moving from place to place, family names are less easily recognized and carry less identity value for the individual than in earlier days. With retirement, identity through the employing agent, occupation, or profession

6 Dr. Leo Simmons, "Aging in Modern Society," in *Toward Better Understanding of the Aging,* Vol. 1 of "Seminar on the Aging," addresses given at Aspen, Colorado, September 1958 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1959), p. 4.

decreases or is lost. There are few doors open to "Joe Smith, retired." Group identification promotes a sense of self-worth and worth in the eyes of others.

4. Groups are the means by which an older person belongs to something larger than himself or his family. They serve as a channel through which the individual can act in unison with others to express a point of view, accomplish tasks, enjoy experiences possible only through groups, and make his voice heard in the community and the world—feel useful, alive.

5. Status and recognition are elements achieved by the individual within a group, or through a group in the broader community. In our society self-esteem is so closely related to the job one does and the money one earns from it that retirement can easily mean a loss in self-esteem. To be valued by a group for what one contributes to its success, to be rewarded by members' respect for what one is like as a person, to be praised for what one can make, all rebuild self-esteem.

6. Every group requires its members to meet a set of specific expectations. These may concern ways of behaving, dress and grooming, manners, beliefs, type and quality of activity and so forth. We have seen that older people are often left completely on their own as to what they shall make of their retired or older years. Group membership helps to undergird and broaden, focus and define, these expectations.

Thus we see that group participation represents far more than filling in time or having fun. Many basic human needs, ingredients for successful living, are answered only through groups, whether family, community, or friendship. Such associations, large and small, are the avenues through which security, sense of belonging, companionship, recognition and respect, affection and status, are most frequently found. One or all of these familiar channels of life can become completely blocked or closed off to an individual by the simple passage of time.

Every community will want to examine its resources for meeting the needs of its unique population of older people to have a meaningful, well-rounded life. Each older person is faced with the use of his time, his individual supply of energy, his unique interests and possible contributions to be made. However, the community has a responsibility to see that opportunities are afforded through which he can find means for successful living in the areas from which he has been cut off by retirement, loss through death or distance, changes in physical and psychological capacity, and reduction in opportunities for social intercourse.

It is important to realize that *most* of the necessary structure exists now in every community, in such media as the programs of public departments of adult education or recreation, and of libraries, museums, and galleries; in established institutions and private agencies such as the churches, neighborhood houses, community centers, Y's, and so on; in group services, formal and informal, such as lodges, fraternal orders, luncheon or service clubs, bowling leagues, orchestra and choral groups, and the myriad others existing in any community. With such groups it is a matter of sensitizing them to the assets and needs that older people can bring to their organizational life, and educating them to re-examine their total organization's operation to assure participation by older people. Such organizations provide the basis for people of all ages to work on common tasks, in bridging the potential gulf between generations.

It must be recognized that all age groups desire to associate with their peers for a part of their waking hours. It is essential to provide opportunity for older people to meet and join with others of their own age for some activities. Those planning to develop group services for older people will also have to focus their attention on making certain that other activities of community life are open and available to them. For example, if there is a local community chorus or choir, they will want to make sure that an older person has a chance to participate in it along with the middle-aged, the young adults, and the teen-agers. Simultaneously, they may well want to develop a choir of older people themselves as a part of group service activities. The subject of segregation or integration of the older age group in the use of retired time seems in itself rather fruitless. The really important issue—the one to be emphasized—is that of assuring to the older person activities, both with people of his own age and with other age groups in the community, that will give him the opportunity of full-citizenship participation.

Generic and specific in social group work practice with the aging

SEBASTIAN TINE, KATHARINE HASTINGS, and
PAUL DEUTSCHBERGER

This paper represents a coming together of two subjects of very great interest in social work today. As a nation we have become aware of the needs of our aging population, and with this awareness has come a strong effort to extend and strengthen social services to the older person. At the same time, practitioners have been engaged in an intensive examination of social work itself. In our own area, the Practice Committee of the Group Work Section of NASW has been attempting to define social group work practice and explore new possibilities in the application of the social group work method.

Both emphases are apparent in the assignment that gave rise to this paper. We were asked to "identify those aspects of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to the practice of social group work with older people to determine (1) those aspects which are unique, (2) those which require modification because of this particular age group, and (3) those which are common to all social group work practice." [1] This assignment, though difficult, was clear enough and suggested what seemed a reasonable approach. We would take a representative segment of experience with social group work at Senior Citizens in Nashville,

[1] Charge to the Subcommittee on Social Group Work with Older Adults, National Association of Social Workers, 1959.

analyze the experience into its knowledge, skill, and attitude components, and then divide these pieces into three categories: the "specific," the "generic," and—for want of a better label—the "neither-nor."

We ran into difficulties almost immediately. The major obstacle was a lack of reliable criteria by which to separate the generic from the specific. On first sight, everything seemed to us specific. A second look showed everything to be generic. Finally, it all fell somewhere in between. It became clear that we could easily argue for any one of the three categories, but without strong conviction in any. The Council on Social Work Education seminar on the aging in 1958 ended on a similarly inconclusive note.

> Two forces were evident in these discussions. One was the sustained effort of the practitioners who work with the aging to make clear to other participants the distinctive nature of the problems encountered and to identify the specific knowledge and skills needed to meet these problems. The second force was the urge on the part of other discussants to identify basic concepts or general principles applicable to specific problems of aging . . . . *There did not seem to be agreement on the uniqueness of the distinctions identified, nor was there denial of difference* [emphasis supplied].[2]

In other words, there does not seem to be any persuasive evidence as to whether social group work with the older person is essentially the same as other areas of social group work practice or is an entity apart.

It is the thesis of this paper that the problem of deciding the question one way or the other has no definitive solution. That is to say, social group work with the aging differs in very obvious respects from social group work with adolescents; for example, the member is likely to be older and at a different stage in psychosocial development. There are also many similarities. In our culture, members of both groups are likely to be struggling with dependency-independency relations in a significant way, and both must deal with a future that is painfully uncertain.

To debate the relative importance of these similarities and differences in the abstract seems quite beside the point. The crucial question is whether the practitioner can bring a sufficient amount of generalized knowledge of human behavior to his professional relationships so that he can offer appropriately individualized services at a high level of technical skill. This involves a *differential use* of professional

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[2] Grace White, "Discussion Reports," *Toward Better Understanding of the Aging*, Vol. 1 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1958), p. 119.

method, an ability to employ generic understandings in dealing with the specific situation.

These considerations suggest that an attempt to define some area of social group work practice by drawing sharp distinctions between generic and specific may not in the end be very rewarding. The Milford conference, some thirty years ago, made a very real contribution to the development of the profession by separating "agency" from professional "method." [3] There may be some value in carrying this separation to its ultimate conclusion, but it is hard to visualize social group work as pure method, completely divorced from the specific problems to which it is applied and the conditions under which it is practiced. By the same token, social group work cannot lay claim to being a "method" at all without generic principles to guide the practitioner in meeting the technical demands of each concrete situation. Principle and application of principle are so much of a piece in social group work practice that in prying them apart the essential nature of that practice seems to escape us entirely.

One possible way out of this dilemma is to treat "specific" as a kind of statistical concept rather than as an inherent characteristic of a given area of service. That is to say, the same types of human problems will appear in every part of practice and not be limited to any one age group or class of agencies. The overwhelming fear of loneliness, for example, which many authorities consider a distinctive factor in the social functioning of the aged, may be a major dynamic in other groups as well. Modifications in accustomed patterns of activity because of bodily changes or because of illness are not exclusively the problem of the older person. In addition, there are many elderly people for whom neither of these factors is particularly pressing, and it would be a mistake for the social worker to operate as though they were.

The significant point for our purposes is that certain *problem constellations* tend to appear with greater frequency in certain age groups and in the clientele of certain agencies. These constellations may, in fact, turn up with such regularity that they seem to be specific to that age group or area of practice; in another area, they are seen so rarely as to be considered negligible. The occurrence of these problem constellations, however, depends to a large extent upon (1) the nature and function of the agency, (2) the section of the population from which the clientele is drawn, in respect to such factors as age, sex, and class

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[3] *Social Case Work: Generic and Specific* (New York: American Association of Social Workers, 1929).

identification, and (3) the actual services being offered. Under different circumstances, or with another clientele, the same problem constellations will occur, but with less frequency, so that the "specifics" will appear completely different.

The advantage of this formulation is that it suggests a unified conception of social group work practice. The necessity for learning how to make differential use of method in relation to specific problem constellations seems much more pertinent in the light of this conception than trying to determine absolute differences in method from one setting to another. It offers a way of examining the practical application of method in concrete situations without losing sight of the method's generic aspects.

The remainder of this presentation is an attempt to test the usefulness of these concepts by applying them to the problems posed in the original assignment. To do this, we shall (1) describe a program involving social group work services for the older person; (2) assess the influence of agency, clientele, and kind of services on the frequency of problem constellations that seem "specific" to the program; (3) examine what seem to be the recurring problem constellations; and (4) comment on the differential use of the social group work method in dealing with these problems.

The Agency

The program we will describe is the Nashville Senior Citizens Center, a day center for people of retirement age. This was established through the stimulus and activity of the Tennessee State Department of Mental Health, which in 1955 became interested in studying the status of older persons in the community and encouraging experiment with various professional methods to help them maintain happy and useful relationships there. Although the center is the main responsibility of its independent board of trustees, it receives an annual allocation from the State Department of Mental Health, which considers it a "demonstration project."

The center is a multifunction agency and includes: (1) direct services to individuals and groups; (2) research, training of professional personnel, and consultation in work with the aging; and (3) community education and organization. Its core staff consists of professional social workers. There are two staff social group workers and a social caseworker. A registered nurse serves as health consultant. Supplementing these are various activity instructors and recreational specialists

who assist in giving direct service. Medical, psychological, and psychiatric consultation are available to the staff through the Department of Mental Health.

Initially, the center was conceived as a service to all older adults in and around Nashville, regardless of class, education, income, or state of health. However, as people began coming to the center and inviting their friends to join, it found itself serving largely a lower-middle-class group. The program is carried on in two buildings located in a transitional neighborhood at the edge of the downtown section. Very few of the members live in the neighborhood. At the present time, membership is limited to individuals 55 years of age or older. There are about 600 men and women currently enrolled.

The Clientele

It is interesting to speculate as to what might have happened if the center had attracted an upper-middle-class group. The picture would have been rather different, too, if—as in many community centers offering services to this age group—the center had stressed a program for residents of the neighborhood. Certainly, even other features would have been introduced into the program had the agency been sponsored by the State Recreation Department, rather than the Department of Mental Health.

As it is, the membership of the center falls into three broad classifications. Since these will be referred to throughout, we will designate them as "Group I," "Group II," and "Group III," respectively. In Group I, by far the largest of the three, we find individuals who are making a "satisfactory" adjustment to old age and retirement. This does not necessarily mean that they do not face complex and often serious problems in respect to income, housing, or health. It means, instead, that they seem to have the energy and vitality to be able to face their own situations and devise satisfying solutions to their problems. With a minimum of help from the staff they find outlets for their interests and activities.

The typical man in this category is in his late sixties, has held a steady job during his employment years, and now lives in modest but comfortable circumstances. His income is derived from a social security benefit, possibly a pension, or perhaps a combination of both. He lives with his wife in the old family home, or he may be just making a transition to an apartment. Though he lives away from his

children, he has regular contact with them, and these contacts are usually enjoyable and happy.

The typical woman in this category is a widow. Her income is derived from her husband's pension or social security benefits. Though she lives alone, she, too, maintains regular contacts with children and grandchildren and derives a great deal of satisfaction from them. However, she is proud of her independence and keeps her own household despite invitations by children to come and live with them.

Group II, considerably smaller in number than the first, consists of men and women whose day-to-day situations are touch and go. These individuals are likely to have some serious physical difficulty, and in the majority of cases have reality concerns and personal anxieties which prevent them from making the best adaptation to the retirement situation. This lessens their ability to make wise choices and decisions about the specific problems before them.

A number of these people operate on a crisis basis, moving from one critical situation to another. They have difficulty in living arrangements and often move from place to place. They present certain personality impairments which stand in the way of lasting and positive relationships with those who might be in a position to offer support and assistance. Individuals in this group have few, if any, contacts with family and have a severely restricted circle of friends.

Some of these members are indigent, deriving their main economic support from the Old Age Assistance program. The typical person is ambulatory, but unable to form relationships with others on anything like a stable or permanent basis. He often lacks the interest and initiative to make friendships on his own. His outlook toward life and his morale are bleak. He has lost much of his independence and has accepted his dependency—even welcomed it, perhaps. He requires continual support from others, whether they are church members, doctors, or social workers.

Group III, the smallest of all, consists of men and women who are quite isolated and withdrawn. The major factor in this isolation may be emotional, physical, or economic. But with any one of these there are likely to be the other two. Overwhelming problems in any one sphere create serious problems in the others, and all reinforce each other until the life situation gets completely out of hand for the individual. Members in this group are often severely handicapped through loss of hearing and sight. Fractures, muscular impairments, and cardiac conditions are frequent. The typical person is not able to

move too far from his home or his room, and is in a pronounced dependency state, requiring the assistance of neighbors and "outsiders" to perform even the ordinary tasks of maintaining himself and his home.

Services

In designing the services offered at the center and in deciding how activities should be staffed—particularly in relation to the most fruitful use of the social group workers' skills—the center staff has developed a conception of social group work very much like that presented by Fisher and Vinter.[4]   They began by seeing it *primarily* as a problem-oriented method.   Carrying this somewhat further, they concluded that the traditional emphasis on the use of social group work skills in the developmental-supportive area was not entirely sufficient to the needs of the program.

As staff continued to assess the ongoing program and began to be aware of the three broad classifications in the center clientele, they grappled constantly with the necessity for establishing a differential use of method in dealing with the particular problem constellations that seemed to occur over and over again within each classification.   Gradually the larger question of how the social group worker can serve the older person was broken down into many smaller questions, all relating to *this* agency and *this* clientele.   For example, the staff had to think through not only ways in which the social group worker might best serve the needs of the relatively self-maintaining members, but whether or not it would be better to use more of their time with Group II.

In reviewing these early staff decisions for the purpose of this paper, it became apparent that there are no generally applicable answers to such questions.   Each agency must decide for itself the "best" structure, content, and staffing of its services in the light of its specific objectives, its particular clientele, and the kind of professional skills available.

The decision reached at Senior Citizens in Nashville was to serve Group I through general recreational and adult educational programs (classes, bridge, dancing, bingo, community service projects, and a general "drop-in" activity).   Persons in Group II can sometimes

[4] Raymond Fisher, "Social Group Work in Group Service Agencies," in *Social Work with Groups 1959.* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1959), pp. 18–29; Robert D. Vinter, "Group Work: Perspectives and Prospects," *ibid.*, pp. 128–148.

make use of these same activities on their own, but generally need help in doing so. The core of the agency's services to this second segment of the membership is the small-group program carried by skilled social group workers. Some of these groups—the men's coffee club, for example—are of a kind that might be found in a community center or a church. The members are fairly free and open in their participation and are capable of a large measure of self-direction. At the other extreme is the garden club, for the member who is able to maintain only a minimal level of social participation. As might be expected, we find some members moving from one end of this continuum to the other or even operating in both simultaneously.

Home visits constitute a large part of the service to members in Group III. An attempt is made to stimulate these persons into reestablishing their social relationships, and from time to time they are brought to the center for special group programs. In other words, the agency begins with individualized services on a one-to-one basis, with the aim of helping these persons move into a fuller participation with their peers in relatively simple group situations. The staff recognizes that it may not be able to achieve all the goals it has set for itself, but has decided nevertheless to invest its resources of time and skill quite heavily in this program.

Experiences over the last year indicate that the decision was a good one. It has been found that a significant number of persons in Group III were able to become less restricted in their social relationships and more hopeful in their self-regarding attitudes. As this occurred, they began to move into the small-group program on a regular basis, and occasionally even into the more open general recreational activities. This seems strong evidence that the isolated, physically and emotionally depleted individual can be restored to a large degree of social functioning through the utilization of social work skills.

Problem Constellations

It is generally agreed that the three large reality pressures with which the aging person in our culture must deal are (1) the loss of family and friends, and restrictions in accustomed patterns of activity; (2) the need to make an adequate transition from a self-supporting status and/or child-rearing role to a retirement situation and an increasing physical dependency which can ultimately be like that of a child; and (3) a sense of social rejection as being no longer useful or productive. The older individual may react to these pressures by

developing strong feelings about not being useful or wanted, a sense of resignation to the emptiness of the future, and a loss of personal hope.

Yet the reality pressures are not in themselves "problems," nor do all older people display the same degree of negative feeling about themselves and their present social situations. The experience at Senior Citizens supports the current social work theory that the determining factors lie in the amount of economic, social, emotional, and physical resource the older person is able to muster in meeting the pressures upon him. The "problem" breaks into the open and becomes overwhelming when the individual's resources are inadequate or he is unable to mobilize them effectively.[5]

This throws a rather different light upon the categories into which the membership of Senior Citizens has been divided. It also indicates what are likely to be recurring problem constellations within each category, and suggests the ways in which social work skills can be used differentially in this kind of setting. For one thing, it is obvious that the divisions between the groups are not permanent and fixed, but that the whole is a continuum representing, from one point of view, an ascending order of intensity of reality pressures; from another point of view, a descending order of available personal "strengths" and material resources.

In these terms, the members in Group I seem fairly capable of dealing with the reality pressures and of continuing to preserve an adequate level of social functioning. The professional task with individuals in this group is to find ways of supporting their present adequacy of functioning, to provide outlets for their interests and activities, and to open up opportunities for establishing new relationships and interests. For example, their participation in the center's "members' council," a program-planning and co-ordinating body, gives them new channels for a continuing independent and autonomous handling of social relationships, as well as a large measure of control over their own social environment.

As one might expect, reality pressures are quite strong upon the individuals in Group II. These persons are limited in their economic, physical, and emotional resources. Their social functioning is vulnerable even to the point of breakdown. However, the staff is constantly impressed with the resiliency of these individuals, far beyond what the practical and psychiatric literature seems to indicate.

[5] Howard J. Parad, ed., *Ego Psychology and Dynamic Casework* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1958).

Among the individuals in this group, the professional task is to find ways to give support during the periods in which these people are relatively free from pressures—to help them understand their present situations, get satisfaction from the successful performance of their changed roles, and build relationships with their peers and with the professional staff, as a reserve to fall back on when needed. During the more or less frequent crises these individuals experience, the job of the social worker is to help them mobilize their resources and the reserve of feeling and relationship built up in the program toward the solution of the present problem. Very often this involves a combination of group and individual techniques tailored to the person's specific needs.

People in Group III have been overwhelmed by reality pressures and have no reserves to bring into play. They often have little meaningful contact with their social environment. In fact, many have withdrawn their interest from their surroundings and have walled themselves in emotionally through repression of affect. Obviously the professional task in these situations is more complicated. The agency must find ways of penetrating this wall of apathy, usually through several visits to the home. The next step is to help these individuals see that they can deal with small pieces of their physical and social environment by offering them choices as to how they wish to use the worker. For example, the member may ask the worker to return, or perhaps to "skip a week." Somewhere along the line in this process, as the individual begins to re-establish a meaningful relationship to the social environment, the staff has learned to expect a sudden and sharp outpouring of feelings in the form of complaints, self-pity, hostility, and even rejection of the agency and the worker. Actually, this may be an initial sign of trust in the worker, and through the worker the person may begin to perceive the environment as a less hostile force. At this point the individual will often agree to come to the center and "try out" the special group program.

The scope of the present paper allows only this brief glimpse into the kinds of problems the staff encounters in each of the categories representing the clientele of the Senior Citizens Center in Nashville. However, it points up the contention that what is "specific" to any broad classification of people, such as the aging, will depend upon what part of the group is being discussed. To judge from the example of Senior Citizens, where we find the majority of the clientele to be self-directing and adequate to the demands of their present realities, we would be forced to conclude that, by and large, social group work

with the older person need be only supportive. On the other hand, if the agency decided to expand its services to Group III, we should get an entirely different picture of what the older person is like, what he needs, and how social group work skills could best be used.

Differential Use of Social Group Work Skills

In outlining the recurrent problem constellations and establishing what seem to be the professional tasks in relation to each, it is clear that even within the program of a single agency serving the older person, such as Senior Citizens, there must be provision for a differential application of the social group work method. It is not possible within the limits of this paper to explore all the ways in which the social group worker translates his professional understanding into the technical skills for dealing with each concrete situation. We should like instead to comment on some aspects of professional services to this age group which have emerged as having particular significance in the program at Senior Citizens. One may hope that these points can be generalized to fit other settings.

Since Group I, consisting of the relatively self-directing person, forms the bulk of the membership, problem constellations built around developmental factors are most frequently observed in the Senior Citizens program. This indicates that, on an over-all basis, much of the social group work done in this agency is aimed at building supports for the continued maintenance of ego integration in the member. Social group work practice has traditionally been concerned with just such objectives all across the board, and most of the techniques developed in other settings and with other age groups have been adapted advantageously at Senior Citizens.

The group experience, then, must be designed to provide the member with opportunities for independent decision-making, successful performances of his new roles, and the assumption of responsibility over his own group life. However, we cannot overlook the fact that each of these people has a considerable span of life experience behind him and that in all likelihood he has internalized the particular values of his social class in regard to decision-making, criteria of role performances, and the assumption of responsibility. These values, which were crucial to his social functioning prior to the retirement years, may now work against him in his present situation. For example, in the membership at Senior Citizens the persistence of middle-class

norms as part of the member's superego in relation to such things as the impropriety of simply enjoying oneself, or making "unproductive" use of time, or declining to accept responsibilities, forces the member into conflicts which he may have extreme difficulty in resolving.

There are a number of technical and professional implications to this.

1. It is important for the social group worker to accept the reality of this conflict and recognize the meaning it has for the member. Otherwise the worker may push the member into experiences beyond his capabilities.

2. Since the individual member must work this conflict through for himself, the worker is obligated to support him in social situations as they develop and to provide the member with specific opportunities within the range of his individual capacities for experimenting with solutions to this conflict.

3. The agency program itself establishes the climate that gives permission for the relaxation of strict superego values. These values can change and new values be incorporated by the member, not alone through activities sponsored by the agency, but through the member's identification with the worker and with other members.

4. This last point implies that provision must be made by the worker for handling the member's guilt after experimentation with formerly "excluded" activities and entering into formerly proscribed relationships (such as those with members of a different race or religion).

Even though these considerations seem relevant mainly to Group I, they have implications for Groups II and III as well. In Group II, the scope of decision-making is scaled down for the member; the time limits over which the individual is encouraged to plan or to take responsibility is smaller; and the amount of exposure to new values is reduced. Quite often specific reality problems stand in the way and anxiety, hostility, and self-rejection become so great that the member cannot deal with these other things. The worker must begin with these reality problems and feelings first, before moving on to the developmental-supportive role. In Group III, apathy may be so great and contact with environment so tenuous that the worker may have to begin with very concrete services.

These considerations suggest a number of modifications of professional group leadership in working with the older adult.

1. Ego functioning is related to the ability to conceive of and control the future. The older person generally seems sharply aware of the

uncertainty of his personal future. It is helpful for the worker to focus pretty much on the present, to accept a short-term basis for planning with the group, and to help define group goals that are *concretely* attainable. The limits in these respects may be relatively broad for Group I, and at the other extreme are very small for Group III.

2. The amount of detailed planning and specific structuring of the group situation depends upon the worker's estimate of the ego strengths of the member. Group I requires little such planning and resents such structuring. Group II requires more of each, while for Group III both must be detailed and explicit.

3. All the groups at Senior Citizens need strong initial worker impetus and focus. Members in Group I can then move ahead independently; in fact, prefer to do so. Groups II and III require a longer period of direct involvement by the worker, but after a relatively short time even this can be relaxed somewhat. With Group I and to some extent Group II, this momentum seems to carry over fairly successfully to activities outside the center.

4. All groups, with the exception of the adult education classes and the members' council, are open in membership and attendance requirements. Individual members appreciate their freedom to move in and out of them. This supports the right of the individual to make his own decisions and gives him the respect he needs as a self-determining person.

The worker's success does not depend so much upon the way he uses these techniques as it does upon the way he uses himself in the professional relationships with the members. These relationships are extremely complicated and present strong psychological overtones. The worker, after all, is usually younger—sometimes much younger—than the person he is serving. Since so much of the content of that relationship focuses on the process of aging, it tends to activate in the member all the conflicts he may have, either manifest or latent, about dependency upon children. Similarly, it may activate in the worker all his feelings about parental figures. The implication is quite clear. The process cannot be helpful, and in fact may be destructive to the member's functioning, unless the worker has adequately dealt with his own feelings about aging and the aged so that these feelings do not stand in the way of the full measure of his skill.[6]

6 William Posner, "Adapting and Sharpening Social Work Knowledge and Skills in Serving the Aging," *Social Work,* Vol. 2, No. 4 (October 1957), pp. 37–42.

Summary

This paper was originally addressed to the problem of the "generic" and the "specific" in social group work practice with the older person. We found ourselves unable to make these distinctions reliably and began to wonder whether the search for the generic and the specific does not actually open up dangers of developing stereotypes about the kinds of problems with which the social group worker deals, and inflexibilities in the application of the social group work method.

As an alternative, we propose the idea that what is seen as specific to a given agency or area of practice is the more-frequently recurring problem constellation. The nature and function of the agency, the sample of the population from which the clientele is drawn, the social class norms predominating in that sample, and the particular kinds of services being offered are the determining factors in the actual frequency of occurrence of these problem constellations.

Within this framework the program and membership of a single agency was analyzed. It was found that the problems manifested by older people depend upon the balance between reality pressures and the person's usable resources—economic, emotional, social, and physical. A large part of the ability to mobilize these resources is determined by the individual's social class identifications and the degree to which the values of his culture encourage positive attitudes toward the retirement situation.

Even in the fairly small program we have described, with a clientele drawn largely from a single socioeconomic class, the number of individual variations in the level and kind of balance between pressures and resources was very great. In other settings these variations may be even more numerous, and many other kinds of problem constellations may appear. This suggests that there needs to be a differential use of social group work skills and a flexibility in the application of the social group work method.

Fundamental to this entire conception are two variables: (1) the extent to which the worker has been able to resolve his own feelings in respect to aging and the aged, and (2) the quality of emotional response he is able to maintain in his relationships with the members and their groups.

Delinquency treatment
by a public-private agency team

ROBERT E. NOLTE and JOHN J. FALLON

The problem of delinquency in the sixties is not one of creating the skills and knowledge of professional services to youth. While we have much yet to learn, the fields of social work, psychiatry, education, and medicine have well-established diagnostic processes and treatment procedures. The real impasse is in bringing together soon enough the vulnerable youth and the professional help which is available. It is not now an agency problem. It is a problem in community organization, a problem of communication.

Within the social welfare field, there is not nearly enough co-operative effort between public and private agencies. The public agency has certain legal responsibilities which are defined by law and which it is directed by law to carry out. In the area of service to the delinquent child, a number of public agencies are already legally involved: the school system, the welfare board or its equivalent, the judiciary, the police department and juvenile court, eventually perhaps an institution or state body responsible for delinquent children, or the probation department or department of court services.

Although the mission of the private agency may be privately determined, if it seeks public support it is to be assumed that it is focused upon an unmet social need. Traditionally, our great national private agencies have sought to meet otherwise unmet social needs in the area of delinquency prevention, control, and treatment. The vast num-

ber of private agencies which are serving effectively with recreational and group work programs directed to the reasonably well-adjusted child are working in a field of service which does not require them to maintain an intimate liaison with the public agency. However, as soon as we concern ourselves with the delinquency-prone or delinquent child, such close contact is of paramount importance. Public agencies are providing more and more services and higher standards of service to meet the problems of the delinquent child. In the vast gray area between the well-adjusted child and the delinquent child there is too little being done. These are the children whose personality and environment show weaknesses which almost inevitably lead to delinquent behavior. Within this gray area the public agency welcomes the close co-operation of other community forces. It is in this same area that the most dramatically effective progress in the eventual reduction of delinquency can and will be made. This same gray area of "vulnerable" youth should also include delinquent boys and girls who have normal potential but have been involved in some delinquent acts. These children may benefit by the same type of therapy as others whose behavior patterns show similar problems but who have not been apprehended in illegal behavior.

Meanwhile, until a program of community-wide early identification begets a community youth inventory and an effective treatment program for all types of children, perhaps there is another way in which we can strike hard at this problem. This is by treatment of delinquent children who possess normal potential even though their behavior may be erratic.

In Minneapolis such an effort has been carried out in a co-operative program between the Volunteers of America and the Department of Court Services of Hennepin County. The Volunteers of America own and operate a 720-acre ranch located within 45 minutes of the city, which has many unusual program facilities, including one lake and part of another, a new half-million dollar lodge, a large farm program with eighty head of cattle, riding horses and many other animals, and a natural woodland setting which makes available all the opportunities of a good camp. The organization had worked for several decades with delinquent or near-delinquent youth and was interested in focusing more intently upon a treatment program for these children. They approached the head of the Department of Court Services in Hennepin County, with the suggestion that a weekend treatment program be set up at the Bar None Ranch for children with normal potential who are under the supervision of the department. Under his direction

this department had been seeking for several years to find new answers to the problems of probation.

Six months were spent by selected staff members of the two organizations in study and planning. In midsummer of 1959 after the broad outlines of the program had been set up, Jack Fallon, one of the authors of this article, was added to the staff of the Department of Court Services and assigned to the ranch. His salary is paid by the Department of Court Services, and he functions officially in the role of a probation officer. Mr. Fallon is a social group worker. The cost of the balance of the staff, the facility, as well as other costs of the program, are carried by the Volunteers of America. Mr. Fallon functions as liaison between the two agencies and as the single person who is in closest contact with parents and child.

In setting up the program, there are several concepts which we sought to prove or disprove. Could a social group work program conducted on weekends which included only one-third of the child's time effectively change behavior patterns? If the program proved effective, how would the length of treatment compare with that conducted in a full-time institution? What would be the comparative costs of rehabilitation? Is there some advantage in conducting a reasonably intense therapeutic program without removing the child from his community and home environment? Is there some program advantage in combining the authoritarian role of the court and the comparatively permissive program that can be carried on by the private agency?

Other questions arose in connection with the decision to conduct group sessions and personal counseling with the parents. For instance, to what extent would the movement of the child toward readjustment be accelerated by the concurrent group therapy with the parents? To what extent would the parents prove co-operative and a positive influence during the treatment program?

The Program

The Bar None weekend ranching program is probably best described as an intensive social group work program designed to enable the delinquent youngster and his parent or parents to develop an awareness of their problems, and provide an opportunity for seeking and testing acceptable ways to solve them. Inherent in the program are some of the ingredients basic to social group work as we know it: purposeful use of program content in an effort to meet the needs of the individual and the group and to accomplish the goals and objec-

tives of the agency; conscious use of the values intrinsic to various program aids in an effort to bring about desired changes in the child's behavior and sense of values; and use of the discussion method to analyze individual and group behavior in an effort to understand better the reasons for such behavior and to provide the individual and the group with an opportunity to seek better ways of meeting situations which present difficulties.

Each child is picked up from school on Friday afternoon and arrives at the ranch, which lies about 32 miles from downtown Minneapolis, just before the evening meal. At the ranch he is greeted by his group worker who helps him get settled for the weekend. In this moment of initial contact the worker tries to establish the feeling of warmth and concern so necessary for the child and at the same time attempts to detect his emotional state. For some the week away from the ranch has been a period of constant conflict with their surroundings, and the child welcomes the return to the place where he can find some measure of understanding and acceptance. Some arrive with the effects of the latest crisis still upon them—another trip to court, more trouble in school, or continued inability to understand or solve the problems facing them. The new referrals arrive fearful and cautious, not sure of what they will find, and old-timers are already making plans for the coming week or seeking out a buddy to talk over the past one. In the midst of this the group worker stands ready to help where he can, so that from the very moment of arrival every rancher can feel wanted and accepted.

Friday evening after supper and group singing, each group of from five to eight ranchers, with its group worker, meets to plan the coming weekend. Each group is allowed a maximum of freedom in setting up its program. Only three things are scheduled: church services, mealtimes, and bedtimes—and even these can be changed to accommodate special program plans. However, these scheduled items offer the child the security of knowing what is coming next, help him gain a sense of time, and afford an unobtrusive source of authority with which to deal. Around these factors the group is free to choose what it would like to do.

Saturday morning after breakfast there is a "Thought for the Day" and then each group goes about its work project. These vary all the way from barn-cleaning to baking cookies. Work projects are usually over in about two hours, and the ranchers have time to clean up for lunch and enjoy some free time. After lunch the recreational aspects of the program begin. Each individual has an opportunity to

select two of the nine interest groups offered. Each session lasts one and a half hours, with a half-hour snack break between group sessions. These are varied and designed to meet the needs of individuals in the group; they range from auto repair and gem-polishing to horseback riding or just free time. If a group desires to take a hike or plan some other type of program during the afternoon, it is free to do so.

After supper the total group meets for mass activities, or individuals may have an opportunity to discuss specific problems with a worker. Following this, the group holds a discussion meeting in which they evaluate the day and single out some of the problems they have had or point out some of the things they have accomplished. During the discussion the individual can express his hopes and fears and ideas, and seek the help or support of the group and the worker. Comments go from "Who do those FBI jerks think they are, coming to my house and pushing me around?" or "I ain't no lily-white angel myself, but that big moose is picking on the little guys," or "How could you have jumped out of the fuzz bus when they ain't got any handles on the back doors?" to "Well, I tried it and it didn't work," and "I did like you said. When he tried to start a fight I walked away and he did look silly," or "She must have meant me because there isn't any other kid in school on probation." Each of these must be handled. Some the group takes care of; for some the worker offers suggestions. In no case does anyone have to accept the ideas presented in the discussion meeting—this comes only after the individual is able to identify with the group, the worker, or the program.

Following the discussion there is an evening lunch and then bedtime. Here again the worker is on hand to give each rancher individual attention before bed: a word of encouragement, a suggestion, a compliment for a job well done or progress with a problem, or a bit of counseling for a troubled rancher and a wish for a sound sleep and a happy new day.

Sunday morning is started with church services, and every boy is expected to attend the church of his choice. Protestant services are held at the ranch and each rancher is given an opportunity to participate in whatever way he can. Some read the text, some are ushers, and some sing in the choir. Arrangements have been made with a nearby Catholic church for ranchers to serve Mass if they so desire. After church the ranchers finish off their program, clean the lodge, and return by bus to their homes. On alternate Sundays the parents of the ranchers in the program come out for a discussion meeting. Sitting informally around a table, drinking coffee, they soon learn that

they can express their feelings on their children's problems or their own. The group is encouraged to exchange ideas and the worker serves only to keep the discussion going if it falters.

Four basic areas form the bulk of the program content: work, play, discussion, and group living. The effective use of these tools depends on understanding that the child is referred to the ranch because he has problems, and in an effort to solve these problems has turned to delinquent behavior. In the initial referral process the boy is interviewed along with his parents and at that time this is discussed with them. The child and his parents may find this strange at first, but in a short time they are able to look at their behavior in light of why they do it, what it does to them and to others, and is it the right thing to do? As both begin to develop awareness of problem areas, they are able to make fuller use of the program. The staff is trained to make as much use of the discussion as possible, and while only one formal discussion is held each weekend, groups are constantly stopping to talk through some problem that has presented itself. As the individual learns the problem-solving process, he is soon able to apply it to other situations and thus a new tool begins to enrich his life.

Our success in the initial stages of the program has been rewarding. Of the 36 children who have been registered in the program from the beginning, only 6 have been returned to court for further violations. Of these 6, 3 have been continued in the program and 3 have been referred to state and county institutions. Three children have been released to foster homes and are making a satisfactory adjustment at this time, and one is presently undergoing diagnostic study in a mental hospital. Two boys have been released from the program and have not been involved in further difficulty. Three girls were dropped from the program and continued on probation, with one of these subsequently referred to another institution. Of the parents involved in the discussion group, all but two have attended the prescribed number of six sessions, and these are in the process of completing them.

Advantages to the Agency

The co-operative endeavor of the agencies involved—one public, the other private—resulted in benefits for both. By undertaking a joint effort, the staffs of the respective agencies have a better understanding of the work that each is doing. This has engendered a feeling of mutual respect. Moreover, the impact of their combined

services has resulted in a better understanding of the work of both agencies on the part of the general public.

The private agency gained certain advantages in working with the public agency, among which are the following:

1. In the mind of the public, a program conducted in co-operation with the Juvenile Court and the Department of Court Services seems to enjoy some sort of endorsement. The public seems to assume, rightly, that the court would not be involved in anything but a program of quality with high standards.

2. Unless the private agency has a referral source such as the court or probation office, it finds itself in a "come one, come all" type of activity. This may be advantageous in some ways, but in seeking to treat delinquent children, some economy of effort and strength of program results from concentrating on children with the same problems. It is now possible to approach the group directly and frankly on the matter of courts, probation, and the whole question of the importance of authority and the law.

3. Without the authoritarian backing of the court, treatment of the aggressive child gets off to a slow start. Typically, he would approach the private agency with a hostile attitude. With the backing of the public agency he is still resentful, but at least he feels that he is participating in the program.

4. The public agency also makes possible a vast array of corollary services such as casework records, psychological testing, psychiatric counsel when needed, and a closer working relationship with the schools, welfare board, and other agencies. This makes possible a quality of service that most private agencies could not afford to undertake alone.

The public agency's gains from the joint venture might be enumerated as follows:

1. The stigma so often attached to a county agency is not as likely to attach itself to a joint program when people can identify with the private agency if they so wish.

2. The private agency is usually freer to engage in undertaking the development of a new approach to a problem, and thus valuable time is saved in starting a program through joint effort.

3. Existing community resources are more fully utilized, and thus total cost of development and maintenance of the new program is greatly reduced.

4. The public agency operating on a fixed budget would be unable

to develop needed resources of this kind without the aid of the private agency with its existing staff and facility.

5. The combining of the two agencies makes it possible to utilize more fully the specialists employed by both. The public agency gains the skilled staff and years of experience in an allied field of the private agency.

6. The public agency is able to retain the authority role with the client that would be lost in the usual process of referral.

While both agencies gain a great deal through the combined program, probably the real benefits are passed on to the community, where at little additional cost the services of both are greatly enhanced. The co-operative program is perhaps above all else a beginning point in a community pattern which may someday bring together all available resources to meet as nearly as possible all the problems related to delinquency. Only when this type of community action becomes effective shall we finally achieve some success in control and prevention as well as treatment of delinquency.

Group work services
in residential settings

HELEN U. PHILLIPS

This paper starts from the assumption that a social agency that provides group care can offer its clients unique and constructive experiences for their personal and social growth. Perhaps we are prone to view residential care as a regrettable though necessary substitute for another, more desirable way of life. Is there an additional dynamic—a "plus"—in group living? In the case of the pregnant unmarried young woman, it will perhaps not be irrelevant to note that the very presence of others, all of whom are facing similar realities of present and future, provides a growth experience denied to the expectant mother living at home.

The compelling question for the institutional worker is how to help each resident use to her maximum benefit the group relationships that characterize the agency's service. Those who work in residential social agencies of any variety know the complexities and significance of group living, both to the resident and to the workers. They know both the demands and the constant opportunity for helping that this presents. While this is signally true for the houseparent or child care worker—or whatever job title is given to the staff personnel employed in the daily, direct care of residents—it is true as well for the executive director, the social caseworker, and other professional persons who comprise the staff. This paper will not dwell on the general dynamic qualities of group living, but will be focused rather on the potentiali-

ties of a defined social group work service for contributing to the central purpose of the agency, taking into account primarily something of the nature of direct service in a residential social agency. Various group structures for offering this service, and the role of a group work consultant will be considered briefly. Although these considerations are pertinent to all social agencies providing group care, we shall focus here mainly on work in a maternity home for unmarried mothers, using by way of illustration recorded material from one such agency.

Purpose and Method

Since professional activity emanates validly only from professional purpose, one must start with the purpose of social group work as a specialization of social work. This is dual in nature, and both aspects must be maintained simultaneously by the practitioner: helping each individual to use the group experience for gain in self-value and social responsibility, and helping the group as a unit to develop and value its own entity and to identify and act on increasingly social goals. In the maternity home, with its shifting population, the first of these purposes is more obvious. But the second, too, is important, for "if personal, individual strength and self-value are to be gained from participation in a group, there must be an awareness of common focus among the members and identification of each one present with the others as a member of the given, specific group. Hence the worker's purpose includes helping the group members to establish themselves as a group unit, although temporary in nature." [1] The social group worker finds direction for all his activity in the purposes of social group work, of the agency in which he practices, and of the group he serves.

The social group work method is the disciplined and conscious way in which the practitioner engages group members in a process of relating to each other, to the agency, and to himself. It is an enabling method with emphasis on facilitating individual and group movement toward social goals. Its component might be listed as the worker's use of process, function, communication of feeling, relationship, focus, form, and content. Among these various aspects of method, all of which are essential to social work helping, four will be dealt with here: the focus on developing group relations, the use of the immediate living situation as content, the use of program activities as content,

[1] Helen U. Phillips, *Essentials of Social Group Work Skill* (New York: Association Press, 1957), p. 155.

and the question of holding to, and using, the function of the agency.

To make them come alive, let us examine some actual examples in practice.[2] A meeting was called by the social group worker for the purpose of working on a conflict situation that was beginning to affect everyone in the home. Two points may be especially noted: (1) the series of interlocking relationships affecting the group climate—that is, the relations between two of the girls, relations in a subgroup of four, and relationships within the whole resident group; (2) the demands for group participation, and thus for group work help, in the day-by-day responsibilities of living together. The worker records:

> 10/25/57. As soon as I set foot in the agency I encountered Chris in the kitchen. She fairly blurted out, "Did you know there is a petition going around against me?" I soon discovered how upset she was and how much tension existed in the home due to her difficulties with Peg. For the past two weeks they have bickered back and forth over a variety of issues. A climax was reached a week ago when Peg was awakened by Chris taking a shower after hours . . . . The matter had been thrashed out at the weekly meeting of all the girls four days ago. Now I could see that it must still be smoldering and the time seemed at hand for more staff direction in this fight . . . . I proposed to Chris that she and Peg meet together with me to talk this out. She seemed relieved at this and quickly consented, adding that they were going their own separate ways now and hadn't spoken to each other for several days. I said I felt the house was too small for this to continue.
>
> Later I proposed to Peg that we meet with Chris . . . . She felt pessimistic about such meetings. Chris was as she was and she, Peg, was as she was, and that was all there was to it. I said I believed that people could change if they wanted to enough. Peg was still reluctant, but when I said that I didn't like the tension that was spreading to all the girls in the home and that I thought she could do something to resolve this, she agreed to come . . . .

As the morning proceeded, the worker, discovering the extent of agitation in the residence, enlarged the meeting to include Eleanor and Mildred, who, with Chris and Peg, made up the older group of girls in the home, in both age and length of time in residence. They held the most responsible jobs and had been a close clique until Peg's behavior became so annoying to the other three that they began to exclude her.

> When the five of us got settled that afternoon I immediately got to the business at hand. I told them they had all been part of

various kinds of meetings since they had come to the home—some were doing special things together, some were for making plans, and did they remember when they first came to the home in the very first meeting I had with each of them, as with all the girls, I talked with them about the give and take of group living, of what went into getting along with others, of being liked and liking? They nodded with recognition and I said that I was concerned here today with the fact that Peg wasn't talking to Chris, that Chris turned her head when Peg went by, that there was talk of a petition, etc. I wanted them to let their hair down in this meeting and try to talk out their difficulties. I knew this wouldn't be easy—it was going to be tough going. They first of all had to trust each other and trust me and believe that there was a possible solution to this trouble. Would they try to work on this with me? Chris gave a quick "yes" and each girl assented in turn. I then asked who would try to start us off . . . .

Here it was Chris who first launched out on her version of the shower episode, and in a full hour's discussion the girls faced what they all were doing that irritated others and considered what they could do about it. They discussed some of the house rules, what they could do when they knew a rule was being broken, and their relation to staff in regard to rules.

Chris thought Peg had no right to accost her so directly; it was none of her business. If she had a complaint she should go to the girls in charge of seeing that everyone was in bed by 11:00 and they would take the complaint to staff. Peg said she minded taking things to the staff; she thought the girls ought to work things out among themselves . . . . Eleanor thought they ought to go to the staff when the problem involved several of the girls but that they ought to solve their little grievances themselves as much as possible.
    I gave support to their trying to work on their disagreements themselves but thought that sometimes their very closeness to each other demanded outside help from some one who could see all sides of the situation. I hoped they could see this staff interest as help, rather than power over them . . . .

Among other things, the girls viewed what is involved by way of relations with each other as they carry out their work responsibilities.

They pointed out everybody's jealousy when Peg takes over jobs that have been assigned to somebody else. Eleanor said she realized that Peg was accustomed to working much harder than she does here, but when she has to do everyone's job in addition to her own, it was hard on all the other girls. They all said that it was depriving some girls of the responsibility they needed and cited Lou as a "nonentity" until she was given the responsibility of

chairing the Closet Committee. She did such a good job that she was later elected chairman of the whole group . . . . Eleanor, with some hesitation, said that when she cooks with Peg, as she is doing this week, she feels completely overshadowed. "I'm not the best cook in the world but I do enjoy cooking." Peg said that she was sorry but she always felt they had to hurry. She hoped there would be time tonight to plan to work differently. I said I surely would end the meeting in time for that and both Peg and Eleanor seemed interested in trying to cook together instead of side by side . . . . I called time and asked what next steps were. Chris said she was glad for this meeting. She had started talking to Peg at the outset and intended to continue after the meeting was over. Peg made a positive comment and said she was glad to know what they thought. The others joined in that they wanted to try to work things out in action now and might not need any further discussion. I said I was real glad that they had all worked so seriously together today and felt sure that they would see to it that life at the home would be more comfortable now. Since they were looked up to by so many of the younger girls, I thought it terribly important that they could talk things out and want to work together . . . .

Learning what it meant to be a participating member of a group and discovering one's part in the whole, learning to accept and live with the differences in others, facing one's own pattern of relating to others and choosing what one will, and can, do to change—all these developments are possible through the interaction of group members as they are helped to work in process together on matters of genuine and common concern, as it was for these four young women.

The social group worker recognizes and consciously aims to develop among the members mutually satisfying relationships. He is active in helping each member to define, and possibly change, his unique role in the part-whole configuration of the group. His own active connection with the group as a whole and with each member is to the end of strengthening group relations. Thus is the focus on developing group relations pursued as an essential aspect of the social group work method.

In the meeting recorded above, clearly the worker's focus was on relationships between the girls—not only the two girls involved in personal conflict or the four present in the room, but the whole resident group. Her own concern for them as staff, her sensitivity to their feelings, her expectation that they *could* do something to resolve the conflict, freed the girls to interact and help each other as they moved to both individual and group decision to take a new kind of responsibility for their part in group living.

The aspect of social group work method that requires the use of the immediate situation as content was equally significant to the process of this meeting, for it was centered on the daily activities of living together. Certainly the real and immediate demand of group living comprises an appropriate and, indeed, compelling locus for group work service. This point is made beautifully clear by Dr. Elliot Studt:

> [An] . . . important tool found in therapeutically designed group living grows out of the combination of the group experience with the content of daily living. This combination gives group experience a peculiarly rich symbolic, sub-verbal content which can be used as an extra emotional valence to give group experiences as they happen especially significant impact. Because group living is concerned with the basic aspects of biological and hence of emotional life, with eating, sleeping, toileting, cleanliness, and the giving and receiving of affection, what happens in the group may reach through to feelings more directly and meaningfully than in any of the more formal group experiences where the content is concerned with education and recreation. Thus the individual . . . may find in the group a new way through to relationships in sharing such basic experience. Both his orientation to the activities and his ability to relate to other human beings may be enriched because of this conjunction of group experience and living processes with its potentiality for spontaneous sharing of emotions with other human beings . . . .[3]

It may be noted that, although Dr. Studt sharply emphasizes the group values to be derived from the content of daily living, she does not disparage what she calls "the more formal group experiences where the content is concerned with education and recreation." What may a group work service provide for the residents of an institution by way of growth experiences through educational and recreational activities? Again the social work and agency purposes determine the selection of activities and the way in which they are initiated and developed.

The very function of a maternity home suggests educational content in which residents have deep and compelling interests—the biological and psychological processes of growth, prenatal care, nutritional aspects of pregnancy—more deeply, the psychological aspects of pregnancy, particularly the meaning of separation as it is anticipated at both birth and placement of the baby (if the baby is placed). Whatever the specific content, some of which is the focus of casework service, the group's consideration of it affords a valuable experience in social

[3] Elliot Studt, "Therapeutic Factors in Group Living," *Child Welfare*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (January 1956), p. 5.

relationships. One group worker, Mrs. Ruth Middleman, writes as follows of the connection between purpose and content:

> The purpose for which a group is formed should be clearly thought through and should be consonant with the over-all emphases of the maternity home. The main purpose of group activity is to offer the resident a supervised experience in social relationships and not a substitute school experience. The groups are primarily experiential and not educational. With focus on developing social skills, the content of the group experience is less important than the quality of relationships developed among the members and between the leader and the members.[4]

The residents of a maternity home may well be in a highly creative stage of their lives as older adolescents, young adults, or adults. The months spent in the institution can be a time in which they have a rich opportunity to express and develop, *in process with others,* their many and varied creative interests, and so recreational activities are extremely important in residential care. This does not refer to solitary pursuits such as reading, playing a musical instrument, or producing a piece of handwork independently, for all the recreative value they may contain, but rather to activities that will further group relations in addition to the value of the medium. Again I quote from Mrs. Middleman.

> The group worker can initiate and encourage particular activities which emphasize, in fact, demand the togetherness and relatedness of the members in a *group* to accomplish a satisfying programmatic experience. . . .

> . . . there is a world of difference between each person working on his own article sitting near others and a group-centered activity which by its very nature emphasizes the need to gain a relation to those others in a group.[5]

With such purpose as direction, then, in the development of recreational activities, the participants can gain in self-value, and group identity can emerge in the process of joint planning and experiencing special events—parties, for example, and trips, cookouts, informal dramatics, craft projects, group singing. Especially valuable are the group activities that relate residents of an institution to the outside community, as an experience in developing their capacity for social

4 Ruth R. Middleman, "Social Group Work in a Maternity Home," *Child Welfare,* Vol. 38, No. 2 (February 1959), p. 17.

5 Ruth R. Middleman, "Arts and Crafts as a Group Centered Program," *The Group,* Vol. 17, No. 2 (December 1954), pp. 16, 17.

relationships. Thus, a group worker in a residential agency for emotionally disturbed adolescent girls (Youth Service, Inc., of Philadelphia), describes the way a group of girls, early in their agency placement, gradually tested themselves in social relationships, gaining in courage and satisfaction through their experiences with each other and the worker.

> A trip to an ice cream store found the girls refusing to leave the worker's car to buy the ice cream, leaving this part to the worker. Several trips later, the group was able to go into the store, make a purchase, and run back to the car. Slowly, with the worker's support, they ventured a step further to go into the store, make their purchase and remain there to eat it. They talked with each other and were able to talk with those who served them. This group later developed its group life to a point where the girls could move into a program that involved their going into a restaurant, ordering, and eating dinner together . . . .[6]

One might observe that they had also moved into their placement enough to be free to trust themselves as persons and that the worker's help to them in recreational activities that made increasing demand for socialization skills contributed to their movement in using the agency's service as well as in their social growth.

Coming now to agency function, one of the components of the group work method given above, this too may be elaborated and illustrated from practice. The social group worker uses the agency function—the defined nature and scope of its services—in two ways: (1) to find direction, scope, and depth for his own activity with the groups he serves, and (2) to represent his agency's function to group members as he helps them to comprehend it, to choose whether—and how—they will use the agency's service, and finally, to use it.

The function of a maternity home, one assumes, is to help unmarried pregnant young women to make responsible plans for themselves and their babies and prepare for return to their communities in such a way that they will gain in self-value and in capacity for responsible social relationships.

What follows here is the group worker's recording of part of the regular weekly scheduled meeting of all the residents of a maternity home for unmarried mothers. These meetings, well structured by staff and girls, are the vehicle through which the group's opinions are

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[6] Alma N. Quigley, "Building Relationships Through Program in a Residential Setting." Unpublished master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, 1949, p. 27.

channeled to the staff and administration.   Policies are discussed and
sometimes proposed, plans for joint activities are made, committee
responsibilities are determined and assigned.   The chairman, Tony,
in planning the day's agenda with the worker, said that the girls
wanted to discuss with her their reaction to a TV program on unwed
mothers which they had viewed the previous Thursday.   The worker
expressed eagerness to know their point of view.

> As soon as Tony opened up the subject of the TV program for
> discussion, several girls expressed how annoying this program
> had been, how false it was, how it misrepresented life in a mater-
> nity home and how harmful they thought this was.   Marge was
> especially vocal. She said that it showed girls keeping their babies,
> and we do not do this, that it showed very little of the staff, that
> it showed fights and tensions and arguments and wasn't at all
> like life here . . . .   In general the girls agreed that perhaps there
> were homes like that . . . but that they were concerned about what
> it would do in the area of this city to discourage prospective appli-
> cants from thinking of coming here . . . .   I said there was a very
> disturbed girl pictured in the program and Barbara agreed, de-
> scribing her behavior for all to remember.   I reminded them that
> we have a careful, selective intake process here and probably
> could not accommodate a girl who had to act out her problems
> in such a fashion.   This, too, was a difference between this home
> and what they saw on the screen.   But what was the other side
> of the show?   Was it all so bad?

With the help of the worker, the girls viewed the show as a dramatic
production and began to identify the main purpose of the program:
to show the community at large something about the problem.

> Debby was very vocal on this point, mentioning the statistics of
> unmarried mothers that now exist and how the story has to be told.
> Laura, who had been quiet up to now, made a forceful contribu-
> tion which seemed to be a turning point in the discussion.   She
> said it was good to see this even though it was not perfect.   It was
> good to have the story be told.   Though each of them has her
> own problem with her parents, they know that the reaction of
> people at large is not sympathetic to them.   Yet they will have to
> go their own ways in making their own interpretation and if this
> picture helped in any way to interpret some of the problems they
> were all feeling, then it was a good thing . . . .   I said that I, too,
> felt that this type of story was helpful, despite its imperfections,
> and at least brought the thing out into the open.   I made a com-
> parison between illegitimacy and mental illness, which some years
> ago was not talked about, and while I was making these remarks I
> could see nods and evidences of relief coming from some of the
> girls.

Debby asked a couple of factual questions, including when this agency stopped having the baby return to the home with the mother. It was around this point that many of the girls felt and expressed real pride in the service as it is offered here. Several said that if only the program could have shown how they feel about this home, it would have been a good story. Becky said quite movingly that she came here for help, not for the reasons depicted in the story, and that if she hadn't come for help, she wouldn't have come to a maternity home at all.

I considered with the girls what they could do about this. Just how deeply did they feel that the program gave an erroneous impression of life in a maternity home? Were they willing to try to write something that might counter the impression, at least in this geographic area? There was some discussion of this point and Tony, Becky, Connie, Kate, and others said they would like to try to develop something, if only they could. I left it open without pressure, but said I would be available to work with them and to help them get their ideas down if they wished to do this . . . . Their faces were responsive as I said that I sensed they were feeling that they themselves had taken a responsible step in coming to this home and in planning the way they were with their caseworkers about their babies. They could only hope that other girls would similarly be led to homes where they could get help and the public would gradually take in more of the true nature of the problem for unmarried mothers.

Precipitated by an unplanned, external event, a TV program, the girls in this setting viewed afresh and with intensity their own present experience in the agency. They acknowledged some of the common problems they faced in relation to community attitudes and affirmed for themselves the value of the services they were receiving—not passively, but actively—as they used them. Indeed, in the very moments of this meeting, although they did not articulate it, they were using one of the agency's services as the worker helped them to express, modify, and act on their feelings about themselves and the agency's service.

Structures for Offering Social Group Work Services

In considering the first three aspects of social group work method with which we have dealt—the focus on developing group relations, the use of immediate reality, and use of program activities as content— it has been evident that each is based on the consistent purposefulness of the fourth aspect, the use of agency function. Consistent reference to agency function as direction is equally essential to the process of determining what structures will carry most beneficially the agency's

group work services. Structures are simply forms that develop from the agency's purposes. In residential agencies group structures are deliberately introduced as it is estimated that they will facilitate movement toward the agency's goals. An alert and sensitive staff will both anticipate and discover those points of residential living that lend themselves as focus for group discussions. One such example is the point in time when clients enter the residence. Orientation groups in which both old and new residents participate have proved valuable to both. New residents learn something of "the ropes," to be sure, but more important is what they can gain in a beginning sense of relating to members of this new group of whom they are to become a part. Those who are already established in the resident group, to whatever degree, have a new experience in reaching out; in the process of interpreting to newcomers the resident life, its policies, activities, responsibilities, and opportunities, they themselves move further into placement and find a firmer connection with the agency and its service.

Structures once established must be continuously evaluated in terms of their usefulness to the residents. To what extent are they meeting the needs that have brought them to the agency? *Do* they facilitate movement toward fulfilling the agency's purposes? As Kenneth Pray wrote in 1942,

> The sole justification of all structure and policy is to be found in the performance of a needed service to human beings and . . . this service finds its mark ultimately, if at all, through a contact between . . . people—the helper and the recipient(s) of help. In that basic relationship—in what happens at that spot where the recipient asks, takes, and uses help—are imbedded all the essential tests of administrative structure and operation, along with all the tests of professional technical competency of the individual worker.[7]

The Group Worker As Consultant

And now, in quick conclusion, the social group worker as consultant. For optimum effectiveness the group work service of an institution will, of course, be carried by one or more full-time social group workers. Some residential agencies have sought, and have employed, a social group worker as executive. Some of them are not yet sure of the group worker's place in a residence, or, though thoroughly con-

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[7] Kenneth L. M. Pray, "The Agency's Role in Service," in *Training for Skill in Social Case Work*, Virginia Robinson, ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1942), pp. 120–121.

vinced of the potentialities of group work services, are faced with such practical problems as the number of professional group workers available for employment or budget limitations. Employment of a group worker on a part-time basis may be the means of introducing the service, either for direct work with groups or as a consultant to the staff.

To be a consultant to an agency and not a member of its staff is not an easy position, and yet there are specific services that can be performed. Using his knowledge of groups, groupings, group process, part-whole relationships, group-centered activities, what it demands of a person to be a member of a group—the consultant, in process with the staff, may help to identify the spots where new services can be created and to precipitate deeper comprehension and fuller use of group relationships in the residential setting.

This paper has dealt exclusively with the nature of group work services as carried by the group worker in direct work with groups. It should be noted, however, that of the several institutional patterns of responsibilities carried by the social worker educated in social group work, a familiar one combines direct group work with supervision of house parents and recreation workers.[8]

Regardless of the specific job responsibilities, it is inevitable that the presence of a social group worker on the staff should add a new dimension to the group environment of the residence. The residents themselves have no little part in the changing quality of group life, for indeed it is only as they respond to and use the experiences provided by group living that the group atmosphere can change. The social group worker's part is to offer the agency's group work service in a way that will enable each resident, through his relationships with others in the group, to discover the meaning of true group participation and thus gain in self-value and social responsibility.

[8] See Gisela Konopka, *Group Work in the Institution* (New York: Whiteside, Inc. and William Morrow and Company, 1954), pp. 244–251. *See* also Dorothy F. Kirby, "A Group Work Program in a Children's Institution: An Administrative View," in *Social Work with Groups 1958* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1958), pp. 9–15.